

# WAR AND THE CHRISTIAN

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## CHAPTER I

### WAR AND THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE

THE present volume would be inexcusable if its purpose was merely to add one more to the publications which in recent years have set forth and advocated one or other of the possible answers to the question "Can Christians take part in war?" Those publications, many of them learned, searching and powerful, range from large treatises to pamphlets, and from exegetical and historical commentaries to passionately emotional appeals. Bishops and professors, men of letters, of science, of affairs have contributed to them. The list of them in Britain alone is long and rapidly lengthening; and the interest in the problem is obviously world-wide. Since the British re-armament programme was launched, political and financial interests have to some degree succeeded in boycotting the subject in the daily press: but their influence has had little effect upon the publishing houses. Too many people, especially among the younger generation, are vitally interested to make any serious attempt at suppression feasible. Books on this subject sell; and while they sell,

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Cabinet Ministers and armament firms fulminate in vain. Moreover, their authors come not only from the Churches, but from the two groups which exercise in these days a more than pontifical influence, the professional scientists and the literary intelligentsia. No doubt in an emergency both groups could be easily silenced: but until then no Government in this country would lightly provoke them.

This flood of publications (to which the present writer has added, unashamedly, a tiny rivulet and numerous trickles) testifies to the obvious fact that here in the challenge of war the Church has at last been confronted with the concrete situation for which many of us have long been hoping. It became plain, years ago, that the present bewilderment in regard to religion would only be resolved if our debates were brought down from the realm of abstractions to the discussion of some one specific problem, urgent enough to make evasion of it impossible, and typical enough to represent the essential issues in the wider field of dispute. We knew that vast numbers of men and women were deeply concerned about the meaning and purpose of life, that there was a sincere and widespread goodwill, expressing itself in a multitude of experiments for individual and social betterment and in the formation of in-

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numerable groups of inquirers and propagandists. We knew that the traditional creeds and cults had lost their authority, that the Churches and Christians generally were uncertain of their own theological and ethical principles, and that efforts to discuss matters of belief and practice in abstract and ecclesiastical terms seemed to the mass of folks irrelevant if not meaningless. Plainly what was wanted was a practical issue on which the public conscience was stirred, on which Christians would be constrained to stand and deliver an unequivocal reply, and on which their general and often hazy convictions could be brought to a focus.

Some of us have had a long search for such an issue. We thought we could find it in education: surely after a war professedly waged on behalf of the future all citizens would realize their obligation to the children and demand that the extension of the school age, the overhauling of the curriculum and the recognition of the necessity for religion should be primary tasks: unfortunately an economy campaign prevailed and we had to admit that the country did not take education seriously and that the Churches did not agree as to what religion meant. Then we hoped that some one of the great social issues, leisure, housing, unemployment, might provide occasion for a concentra-

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tion and an awakening: for certain people and in certain places they have done so, and many individuals and groups have found release from futility and a recovery of life in the service of the National Council of Social Service or of the new areas or of South Wales: but the mass of Christians is, alas, comfortable, middle-class and unimaginative: such efforts as were made have been left to the few. Next it seemed as if the broader questions raised first by the Labour Party and then more provocatively by Communism might give us what we needed; and here again by some of us, and especially by the young and intelligent, the challenge has been accepted: but politics no longer excite passion, the Labour Party is too muddle-headed and the Communists, at present, too Utopian to demand general attention. In none of these has there been any prospect of the presentation of an inescapable challenge.

The same failure has followed the efforts to arouse enthusiasm in more directly religious enterprises. There was a glorious moment in 1920, after the issue of the Lambeth Appeal, when it seemed as if the Churches might be fired by the vision of re-union, and in the discovery of their essential oneness might burst the bonds of fear and complacency and exclusiveness. But whether the leaders themselves repented of their gener-

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osity or discovered that they had outrun their mandate, in any case the moment passed: those who had issued the Appeal, like the bishops at Nicæa, spent the next years in explaining it away; and those to whom it was addressed, if they had taken it seriously, were estranged, and if they were content with their own vested interests were given a good excuse for doing nothing. So, too, with the Missionary appeals: it would seem manifest that with an open door awaiting us and a world yearly more accessible. the need and opportunity for evangelism would have been recognized. An admirable case was made; "Christ or Chaos," "The One Front," "A Soul for the League of Nations," "World Unity in Christ" were the head-lines of its clauses: enthusiasm and statesmanship, devotion and administrative ability were revealed in it—the International Missionary Council is almost certainly the ablest and most effective Christian organization of to-day. But the theological uncertainties, the distraction of more domestic interests, and the prejudice against "Foreign Missions" were too strong. No general response has been elicited. Still less success has attended the effort to arouse the Churches in regard to the changed status of womanhood. It would appear to some of us that of all the great revolutions of our time this is in fact the most far-

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reaching, the most obviously Christian, and for religion the most significant. To have overthrown the social, economic and religious subordination of half the human race is an achievement far greater than to have won a war or invented an aeroplane. That it represents the recovery of an essential element in the teaching of Jesus should give it a special claim upon the sympathy of the Churches. Yet when every other profession has now been opened to qualified women, the Christian ministry is still almost universally closed to them, and only a handful of Christians pay the slightest attention to the anomaly—a tragic proof of the extent to which institutional churches have ceased to count in the life of to-day.

It is important to recite this tale of disappointed hopes in order to emphasize the significance of the problem of war. For what other challenges have failed to accomplish, this is plainly achieving. War is, as we are being constantly told and as each day's news underlines, an immediate possibility, from which no people on earth can reckon itself immune. In its modern form it will involve every man, woman and child: no one can any longer shrug his shoulders and murmur "Not in my time, or in any case not for me," as some of us can do with almost every other threat to our security.

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In the older generation there are still some who enjoyed the last war, profited by it,<sup>1</sup> and are prepared to see the same thing happen again: among the young there are not a few who accept it, as their fathers did, as a supreme testing of their manhood: but for us all the threat is immediate and universal; for the vast majority it stands for wickedness and waste; for the Churches it is plainly a challenge to which they cannot without apostasy turn deaf ears.

Here is indeed the situation for which we have been waiting. Fifteen years ago, in the course of preparation for the C.O.P.E.C.<sup>2</sup> Conference and Reports it became evident that the problems of moral and religious life, with which every Christian trying to live out his faith in a sinful world is concerned, were raised in a concrete and easily analysable form by the fact of war. It was in fact the best typical illustration of all the issues with which those who would study the meaning and obligations of discipleship are confronted. We shall have to examine these issues in detail later, and need only now summarize them. It raises first the question of the character of authority; how are we to inter-

<sup>1</sup> Lewinsohn, *The Profits of War*, pp. 243-4, concludes that the total profits as calculated on the basis of excess profits taxes were £10,000,000,000 in English currency to-day.

<sup>2</sup> The initials represent Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship—held in Birmingham in 1924.

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pret the teaching of Scripture, the words and example of our Lord, the attitude and pronouncements of the Church? It involves our whole concept of the nature of God, since struggle has played a large part in the creative process and wars have been characteristic of all human history; what is the origin and place of evil in God's world and how is evil to be dealt with? It compels a searching examination of the Cross as the way of redemption and of the transvaluation of all values which the Cross reveals; how is the Christian to overcome evil? It involves for the individual a conflict of loyalties such as in fact accompanies all corporate life; how am I to reconcile my obligation to the state and my comrades with the demands of a Christian conscience? where am I to draw the line between acquiescence in collective sin and the protest of the disciple against it?

In 1922, though the importance of the subject was obvious, it was hardly possible to discuss it. Passions were still too strong. Those who had fought and those who had refused to fight were too seared and scarred by their experiences to be ready for reasoned debate. If each of us realized that his own position was not so unassailable as he had thought, we had all suffered too much to be free from bitterness; and any suggestion that our views were mistaken seemed



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not only an attack upon our own intelligence and honesty but an insult to our comrades. No man who has offered his life for a cause and is still bearing the psychic and physical evidence of the price paid, can, while the wounds are fresh, discuss whether his offering was a mistake: nor when he has seen his friends tortured and done to death can he admit that they suffered for an error. The discussion at the Conference in Birmingham in which the C.O.P.E.C. movement culminated, poignant and searching as it was, testified that the time for a full consideration of the problem was not yet.

It was not until Armistice-tide 1928 that a change of outlook towards the discussion of war became obvious. The 1918 election with its unashamed appeal to blood-lust, the deliberations at Versailles and the treaty to which they led, the rejection of President Wilson and the League by the United States, the chauvinism of France and the weakness of British statesmanship had indeed already shaken the confidence of those who had believed in a better world as the result of victory. The dreams and pledges by which our morale had been sustained in war were frustrated by events and disowned cynically and shamelessly by their former advocates. The disillusionment and moral

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anarchy of a noisy section of younger people, the heartlessness of "society," the obstinacy of coal-owners and financial magnates, the sabre-rattling of Lord Birkenhead and Mr. Winston Churchill enforced at home the lesson which international affairs were teaching abroad. War was evil: man cannot do evil that good may come: our hopes were ill-grounded: our convictions must be re-examined. At the same time war was becoming more likely and more atrocious: the interval of exhaustion and peace that had usually followed large-scale conflicts was plainly closing: if we had not yet seen the effects of recent developments in organized slaughter, it was clear that another war would involve mass-murder of civilians and threaten the downfall of civilization. Yet if a resolute effort were made before it was too late, the very circumstances which made war so disastrous could become the instruments of a world-wide co-operative commonwealth. No wonder that a deeply felt wave of pacifism spread over the country, or that the Churches felt constrained to take note of it. The Christ and Peace Campaign in 1929, the Lambeth Conference declaration that "war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ" in 1930, the formation of pacifist movements in

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the Congregational and Methodist denominations, and the Conference of the World Alliance at Cambridge in 1931 were indications of their concern.

Few who study the change of outlook, whatever their personal attitude towards it, will deny that it was largely due to motives of which the Christian can only disapprove. A flood of books and reminiscences, dealing crudely with the squalor and horror of life in the trenches, books of which *All Quiet on the Western Front* was a favourable specimen, poured from the publishing houses. Imaginative forecasts of cities deluged with vesicants and thermite, of populations maddened by famine and disease, of civilization blasted into ruin, filled the columns of the press. Disgust and fear, the accumulated effects of nervous exhaustion and disappointment, were responsible for many of the converts to pacifism; and such pacifism was in consequence negative and sentimental. It might, and did, delay the cry for re-armament: it might, but did not, give statesmen an opportunity for constructive peace-making: but its source was largely pathological and its influence consequently impermanent. Those who, like Lord Lloyd, regard man as essentially a fighting animal and pacifism as a product of anæmia had then some justice for their scorn.

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Nevertheless, among much that was deplorable there was a weight of intelligent opinion, of conviction and resolve, behind the popular movement. Men and women whom it is ridiculous to call squeamish or cowardly had openly avowed their change of outlook. They had been able to study war and its effects dispassionately, to examine and analyse the moral and religious principles at stake, to weigh up the alternatives in their collective and individual aspects, and to reach a calm and reasoned conclusion. By their efforts pacifism ceased to be presented in terms of "No more war" or "We won't fight," and developed a coherent philosophy and a potentially practicable programme. It was largely due to their influence that the events of the past five years, which have tested the peace societies searchingly and detached from them their sentimental or timid recruits, have nevertheless seen a steady growth and expansion of pacifism.

A cursory remembrance of the events of those years will show how exacting the test has been. The Japanese invasion of China and the deliberate policy of exploiting and debauching the native population of the occupied provinces;<sup>1</sup> the Italian conquest of Abyssinia with its naked imperialism and unrestrained frightfulness; the

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations Fifth Committee's Report, September 1937.

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rebellion in Spain developing into a struggle between democracy and dictatorship; and the second Japanese onslaught and its accompaniment of terrorism and carnage; in each of these sentiment would urge every one of us to intervene; in each pacifism might seem to be in part responsible for the issue or the protraction of the strife. When, as in the case of Abyssinia, pacifists found themselves forced into an apparent alliance with Lord Beaverbrook in advocating isolation, or, as in Spain, were thrilled by the tale of John Cornford's heroic death, only those who had serious grounds for their faith and had learnt to see the issues plainly and take long views were likely to stand firm. Pacifist opinion was unquestionably shaken: many, and among them some who had been leaders of the movement, were constrained to abandon it: a shrewdly dated election, coming at the crisis of Abyssinia's resistance and following upon a noble, but wholly fruitless, speech by Sir Samuel Hoare at Geneva, was used to plunge the country into vast schemes of re-armament: it appeared that the anæmia had run its course.

Yet it is in fact the case that in Britain, and especially among the Churches, the movement continues to gather strength. Despite the confident and somewhat impertinent scoffs of the less reputable politicians, despite a deliberate

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boycott by the press, despite some official condemnation and much official time-serving in the churches, the evidence shows beyond dispute that the public interest in the question is almost universal and that the conscience of the common folk is deeply stirred. The leaders of the movement can draw audiences larger than those of any other organization, political or religious: the Peace Pledge Union is enlisting more recruits each month than the Army, Navy and Air Force combined: the output of serious books on the subject increases steadily: the formulation of its policy, both theoretical and practical, becomes more definite and widely known.

This conviction of the deep-seated concern with the issue is so relevant to the purpose of the present book that it may be excusable to give a brief mention of a test case. In one of the smallest and most immovable of the Cathedral cities, a place remote from publicity and interested only, and not even there very deeply, in its own domestic affairs, a small group of people, young and without either influence or resources, decided to hold a peace meeting in the autumn of last year. They succeeded in getting Canon Sheppard and Dr. Alex Wood to promise to speak: greatly daring, they took the Corn Exchange, the only large room in the place, printed a few bills, sent a notice to the

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local paper, and engaged the town-crier to announce it. Those who knew the place smiled: an audience of a hundred would be the maximum possibility: the promoters would be left with nothing but unpaid debts. The meeting began at 7.45: by 7.30 the hall was crammed: the next quarter of an hour was spent in stripping the rugs from the platform that the overflow might sit on the floor, and improvising seats out of corn-bins and trestles. More than eight hundred people were packed in and listened for nearly two hours with rapt and obviously sympathetic attention: they asked very intelligent questions, bought large quantities of literature, took away many cards of Peace Pledge Union membership, and by a retiring collection covered all the expenses incurred. The custodian of the hall said afterwards, "I've been in this job twenty years, and I've never seen any meeting so fine as this." To those who know the place such evidence is profoundly significant.

Of course it is true that Dr. Sheppard's name is a household word, that the Peace Pledge Union has gathered together a group of leaders as remarkable as any in the country, that very many, probably the majority, of those who come to such meetings are not, and will not become, pacifists, that the movement as organized may

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still be politically negligible. That is not our present concern. We are merely claiming that here in the problem of war is the dominant moral and religious issue of the day, and that both its character and its urgency make it essential for the Churches to face it.

It was at the Oxford Conference on Church, State and Community in July 1937, that the signal importance of the issue not only for individual Christians but for the whole future of the ecumenical Church became manifest; and it is the experience of that Conference that gives occasion to the present book. To anyone who took part in the discussions of the special committee appointed to deal with Peace and War, to anyone who met the delegates and associates and saw how their interest was focused upon this aspect of the programme, it must have been evident that here was the crux of the whole inquiry, a subject of paramount importance, a subject on which opinion was deeply and sincerely divided, a subject upon which the unity of Christendom might well find itself torn once again into conflicting sects. In spite of the mass of material dealing with the Conference already published, it is worth while to give some fuller account of this particular element in its work.



## CHAPTER II

### THE OXFORD CONFERENCE AND WAR

THE ecumenical movement, the attempt to draw together all the Christian communions for counsel and action, may be said to have arisen out of the great Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910. There the value of such meetings in face of the world-wide evangelistic responsibility of the Churches was so obvious that fuller opportunities for co-operation had necessarily to be provided. The foundation of Edinburgh House and of the International Missionary Council was not the only outcome: for as soon as united effort in the field of missions became feasible it was natural that a similar venture should be attempted in other sections of Christian activity. It was proper that out of the experience of the mission-field and in a land as practical and as sectarian as the United States the question of Christian re-union should be prominent. Edinburgh had emphasized the need for a united front, the iniquity of indoctrinating the churches of the mission-field with Western sectarianism, the wastage and in face of heathenism the relative triviality of "our

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unhappy divisions." Before Bishop Brent of the Philippines and his friend Robert H. Gardiner could give effect to the plan for a united Conference on Faith and Order, the world was at war. War, if it made action difficult, underlined the sinfulness of schism, and as the Lambeth Appeal of 1920 showed, lifted Christians for a time out of their complacent exclusiveness. That the difficulties to be overcome in discussing the problems of creeds, sacraments and ministries were vastly greater than those affecting less controversial issues was evident; and has been confirmed by the experience both of the Lausanne Conference in 1927 and of the Edinburgh Conference in 1937. The deaths of Gardiner and Brent and the lack of any adequate secretariat were additional obstacles. It was one thing to draw together Christians deeply concerned with missionary problems to discuss issues concrete, carefully selected and intensively studied: it was altogether another to expect representative ecclesiastics, chosen as embodying divergent theories of the Church and different sects within it, to discuss and reach agreement upon matters not only intricately theological but obscured by prejudices arising out of centuries of conflict and by vested interests inseparable from the maintenance of the *status quo*. In the one case a true

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fellowship easily emerges and really creative work is possible: the other can hardly be more than a committee of delegates each afraid to make concessions and conscious of his constituency—conditions which can lead to nothing but compromise and a highest common factor, accompanied by the registering of a number of reservations and protests.

There was room for a third element in the ecumenical movement, and this was supplied when Archbishop Söderblom of Uppsala after the war conceived the idea of a Conference on the Life and Work of the Church—the Stockholm Conference of 1925 which was the direct forerunner of the Conference at Oxford. His enterprise possessed assets which Faith and Order lacked. Magnificent as were the vision and courage of Gardiner and Brent, it is not unfair to say that American Christians, long familiar through their Federal Council with united Church activities, can hardly gauge the difficulties which beset re-union in Europe. It was a wonder that they faced those difficulties with such tact and patience: but leadership from the other side of the Atlantic did not make for ease in handling them. Dr. Söderblom, representing a church at once Lutheran in allegiance and episcopal in government, the church of a country neutral in the Great War,

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and being himself a born leader, learned in theology, trained in administration, and gifted with unique powers of speech in all the essential languages, was ideally fitted to inspire united action. He knew the intricacies of the religious position in Europe from the inside; he travelled widely and made contacts easily; and he was quick to appraise a situation and to devise means of dealing with it.

Moreover, so far as Britain was concerned, there was already a long-established precedent for united action in regard to social and industrial problems. Not only had Social Service Unions, following upon the foundation of the Christian Social Union in the Church of England in 1889, been established in all the denominations, but as long ago as 1911 these Unions had met for united conference, and had set up an annual Summer School at Swanwick. Bishop Gore, Father Plater the Jesuit, the Rev. Will Reason the Congregationalist, and Miss Lucy Gardner of the Society of Friends were the leading figures in the meetings; and with the close of the war they were already planning the huge programme of the C.O.P.E.C. movement. Stockholm, following a year after the C.O.P.E.C. Conference in Birmingham, inherited the twelve volumes of the C.O.P.E.C. Report and the support of a British delegation

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already fully accustomed to such co-operation.

The Stockholm Conference, with its representatives from every church except the Roman Catholic, was impressive not only as the first attempt ever made by Christians to discuss internationally the problems of collective life, but as the first occasion since the war in which victors and vanquished had met as fellow-believers to debate the very issues over which they had so recently been struggling. It is small wonder that its concrete results were not to be compared with those of C.O.P.E.C. or that certain problems could hardly be dealt with. War, as we have noted, could not be adequately debated even at Birmingham: in a gathering where the question of war-guilt was rankling in the minds of French and German delegates, and when an ill-chosen word would inevitably have produced an explosion, the difficulties were infinitely more acute. But if the findings of the Conference were relatively unimportant, its value in two directions can hardly be over-estimated. It demonstrated that ecumenical discussion was possible; that the contacts made at such gatherings were of high value; and that a continuation of the work was unanimously desired. It demonstrated also how wide was the difference in their approach to the problems of social life between the English-speaking and

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the Continental Churches. British and American delegates were amazed to find that convictions which pioneers like Maurice or Rauschenbusch had made platitudes to them were not merely unfamiliar to but challenged by the majority of French and German Christians and were largely outside the purview of the Holy Orthodox. At Stockholm there was little opportunity to examine the basis of this divergence; and our representatives were inclined to surmise that it was due to the greater individualism of Continental Protestants and to the other-worldliness of their devotional emphasis. But the contrast was manifest, and its deeper causes have since become apparent.

It is important to bear in mind these forerunners of the Oxford Conference in order to appreciate both the setting and the significance of that gathering. In the preparation for it the cleavage noted at Stockholm became increasingly evident; and by that time had taken definite and familiar form. Familiar as it is, the matter is so relevant not only to the Oxford Conference, but to the whole problem of the Christian's relation to the social order and therefore of his attitude towards war, that it must be examined with some fullness.

It would be unfair and untrue to accuse the social movement in Britain of humanism or to

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charge its supporters with Liberal Protestant leanings. Maurice, Stewart Headlam, Westcott, Scott Holland, Gore, these men with their strong sense of worship, their high doctrine of the Incarnation and of the Church, their insistence upon the reality of sin and the need for redemption could not be supposed to take a shallow or optimistic view of human nature or to over-estimate man's capacity for working out his own salvation. The criticism that the advocates of the social gospel ignored the necessity of conversion, or minimized the significance of Christ was simply unjustifiable as against the supporters of C.O.P.E.C. But it is equally certain that as against the teaching of some American Christian social reformers the stigma is not undeserved. The adventurousness and the successes of its philanthropy, the achievement of welding together immigrants from every nation in Europe into a homogeneous people, the aloofness from the struggles and frustrations of the Old World gave to American thought a confidence in man's power to shape his own destiny that left little room for reliance upon God, for repentance or for redemption. That evil was an illusion or at worst only good in the making, that evolution was automatic and progress consequently a matter of growing older, that men could shape not only the material

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environment but the whole personal quality of the race, and that only a short and courageous effort was needed to release mankind from the tragedies of life—this if not proclaimed in so many words is the plain conviction underlying much of the philosophy, sociology and religion of the United States. Humanism which can point not unjustly to a magnificent record of accomplishments coloured until lately much of its theology and religious ethics; and in some of its exponents took a form frankly irreconcilable with anything hitherto regarded as Christian. I shall not soon forget how in 1930 a professor on the staff of an American Theological College upbraided me for quoting St. Paul, "his *weltanschauung* and psychology are out of date and his teaching consequently irrelevant: why go back to him for guidance?" We were sitting under the shadow of the Riverside Church: I could only cast an eye at it and murmur that there might still be some worth in Chartres Cathedral or the Parthenon.

It is not to be inferred that such complacency was characteristic of any but an unimportant few among American Christians. And upon those even as we were speaking the blow had fallen. In 1930 Dr. Karl Barth had hardly crossed the Atlantic: but he had spoken, and humanism had been challenged by its antithesis.



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This is not the place in which to expound the fullness of his message nor to attempt a valuation of its permanent importance: and I must confess that if confronted with the necessity for a choice between the rivals my spirit would reluctantly assent to the Barthian transcendentalism, but my mind would not less reluctantly take sides with the humanists. That austere denunciation of all human effort, that rigid sundering of nature and grace, that almost fanatical insistence upon the Word of God, a Word in which *Logos*, the divine voice, and *Graphé*, the Holy Scripture, are not always discriminated, comes as its forerunners have come out of an atmosphere not far from despair, and has about it the majesty of the *Credo quia incredibile*. Of course it is not the religion of the Gospels nor even of St. Paul: of course it has no room for an Incarnation and its Christology is explicitly Apollinarian: of course it reproduces the less attractive features of Augustinian and Calvinistic doctrine without their logical coherence: it is an exaggeration of one side of the Christian paradox just as humanism is an exaggeration of the other. But it illuminates vividly the underlying cause of the cleavage which we noticed at Stockholm. If the world is a mass of corruption, if there is no promise of improvement within the span of

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history, if human effort to reform social conditions, to study and plan and organize, is mere unregenerate arrogance, if secular affairs are irrelevant to the Christian, then plainly Stockholm and Oxford and the effort to overcome war are futile if not blasphemous.

Here again it is not to be supposed that Dr. Barth is typical: indeed in large measure he stands alone. But the point of view which he presents is the outcome of a general position widely shared among the Protestant Communion, both Lutheran and Reformed. There is among them a separation of the sacred from the secular, an emphasis upon sin and upon salvation by faith, and a consequent valuation of human nature and a concept of God wholly unfamiliar to British Christianity. We are not humanists, and are not now likely to become such: we are not Barthians, and could only accept his position by renouncing the noblest part of our inheritance. Perhaps it is because we cannot ally ourselves with either extreme that our religion so often seems vague, formless, compromising. The *via media* need not be Laodicean: but experience warns us that it often tends that way. At least we shall not be in a position to fulfil the high task of interpreting afresh the religion of the Incarnation *vis-à-vis* the humanist and transcendentalist exaggera-

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tions until we have clarified and integrated our own thinking and learned what each of them can teach us. At present we are content with a muddled fusion of the two: the time for a true synthesis will come when we are fit for it.

The preparation for Oxford made the contrast between Continental and British theology abundantly plain. None of the Ecumenical Conferences was so carefully or strenuously planned. When Dr. J. H. Oldham realized the urgency of the opportunity and gave himself to the business of meeting it, he brought to the work a unique experience, going back indeed to Edinburgh in 1910, a statesmanlike vision enriched by much travel and constant dealing with international and interracial problems, and a knowledge of the character and personnel of the Christian Churches gained through wide reading and a still wider circle of contacts. With his colleagues at Geneva he set himself to secure the co-operation of individuals and groups all over Europe and America, to supply them with papers prepared by recognized experts, translated and duplicated, and to initiate a movement of study and research in which the Oxford Conference should be only an episode. He realized that if any order was to be brought out of the existing chaos of opinion and any common mind or common action to be made

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possible, it was first necessary to discover the actual and basic points of disagreement. These would inevitably involve divergences of doctrine and theology: agreements formulated upon premisses unexplored or unharmonized could only be temporary and insecure. Like F. D. Maurice, whom Ludlow once accused of being a digger rather than a builder, he would dig down to the roots of the problem before he would attempt to build.

This was a policy never before attempted for such an undertaking. Even at C.O.P.E.C., where only the comparatively homogeneous British denominations were concerned, the theological basis of the programme was surveyed in a single short volume, and for the rest consisted of little more than a citation of relevant passages from Scripture. C.O.P.E.C. disclosed that underlying the differences on matters of ethics or politics were deep-seated and often unrecognized variations in doctrine and religious philosophy; and the discovery inspired many of us to turn from social problems to theology. But to attempt an exploration of the basic convictions of the Christian Churches of the non-Roman world was a task which, as its originator realized, would take not a few years but generations, and might well create fresh obstacles in the path of those who desired

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speedy results and a concrete call to action. That he was right no one who takes a long view or has a clear faith can doubt. That the venture might sterilize the Oxford Conference was a risk inherent in the policy. Many of us feared, and stated, that the meetings could do no more than reveal how radical were the differences that separated Christians from one another.

The preliminary papers certainly gave good ground for such fears. Those from the Continent when submitted to British students seemed archaic in phrasing, authoritarian in their appeal to the formularies of the Reformation, out of touch with the life and thought of to-day, an arid exposition of an irrelevant system. Those from Britain, similarly surveyed by continental theologians, seemed to them to lack grip upon the essential elements of the gospel, to be Pelagian in their view of human nature and Utopian in their refusal to face the tragedy of man's desperate situation. Those from America seemed to us much what ours seemed to the Continent, with the added difference that between British and American theological draftsmanship there is a great gulf fixed.<sup>1</sup> With certain luminous exceptions this

<sup>1</sup> It is unkind but perhaps pardonable to quote a saying, probably apocryphal, of A. C. Benson: "I think Fred's books are bad; and Fred thinks my books are dull; but Fred and I agree that Hugh's books are both bad and dull."

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impression given for what it is worth is, I think, typical. There was in fact some excellent work done: but the difficulties inherent in the scrutiny of documents looked almost insuperable. A common mind seemed indefinitely remote.

It was not the least, indeed as some maintain it was the greatest, achievement of the Oxford Conference that when the authors of these preliminary papers came face to face and discussed their points of view together, the differences that seemed radical became first intelligible and then in large measure secondary. Perhaps it was because we expected to find them: perhaps, when they had been circulated for criticism, we had concentrated upon points of divergence and ignored points of agreement: perhaps it was simply that we met in an atmosphere of fellowship, prayed together, dined together, and gave the alchemy of friendliness its chance to work. At least it is certain that as the days passed men who had deemed themselves poles asunder learnt to respect and appreciate their differences, to wish to give each other full scope to express them, to see one another as partners not as rivals, as fellow-seekers not as heretics. Rarely has there been an occasion on which personal contact wrought so swift a change. We did not agree: our views,

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right or wrong, were sincere and the result of our whole life's history. But we welcomed diversity, knowing that beneath all our differences we were in the depths of our experience at one.

It was this conviction that for many of us made Oxford the birthplace of the ecumenical movement, the disclosure of the reality of the *Una Sancta*. To most of us, I feel sure, the unity of Christendom had been an aspiration and a sentiment—something which existed ideally in the heavens but was not yet and perhaps could never be manifested upon earth. At Oxford we were aware of it not as a dream for the future, but as a fact in the present. No doubt the urgency of the political position, the threat to our common Christianity from the new paganism and the evil of the times, the suffering of many of our brethren, bestowed a truer sense of perspective and drew us into communion. No doubt the fact that our programme was concerned with evils that we all acknowledged, with familiar situations actually existent, gave a realism to our discussions and set differences of formula and even of theology against a background of living experience. But it was worshipping in the same Church, living in the same College, seeing a man's features instead of his typescript that was the major

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influence; and by it we were taught to believe as never before in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and to acclaim our colleagues (whatever the Edinburgh Conference might say about their qualifications) as "living members of the same."

It was in this knowledge that the discussion of war became possible. In Britain, and still more in America, the bitterness which in the years immediately following the Armistice had made pacifists militant and ex-soldiers resentful had largely passed away. The peoples of the Continent for whom war was much less remote, though overwhelmed by the consciousness of its imminence, were similarly released from their previous sensitiveness. There was a total absence of any desire to make the issue personal or to revive old grievances and hates. Indeed the generosity with which French and German representatives considered problems bearing inevitably upon their past and present relations was in itself an inspiration to unity and a proof of it. War had become to us all what it became to men under fire, the manifestation of a sub-human instrument of destruction, an onslaught of blind mechanical forces, ruthlessly torturing the flesh and blood which had called them into being and now could only offer itself as their victim. We might disagree as to the possibility



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of controlling and extirpating these forces, or even as to the legitimacy of their use: but we were united in our detestation of them and in our refusal to conceal their true nature by a glamour of false glory.

This sense of the sheer evil of war was powerfully reinforced by the presence and speeches of delegates from China. Among the noblest and most poignant utterances of the Conference the words of one of them stand out in the memory. "My wife is on a mission to Japan: my daughter is in Peking: as I stand here I am wondering if I shall ever see them again." In the middle of July 1937 those words brought us back to the days when we and most Europeans were haunted by the same question. They confronted us with the stark tragedy and urgency of the issue. They made plain that only a faith that has been won in hell can stand the strain of life. An academic or an embittered debate was impossible in such a setting. It was good for us, especially for the pacifists among us, to face the problem in terms of a concrete and present situation. It is so easy to preach a glib gospel of reconciliation when you are sheltered from any pressing cause for hate or fear.

## CHAPTER III

### IS WAR EVIL?

THE first point to be emphasized in considering the Christian attitude to war is that to-day as never before in history war is recognized universally by Christians as evil. To many this will seem a platitude; by some, and tragically enough by Christians perhaps more easily than by those outside the Churches, it is at present unrecognized or denied: in any case it represents a definite and important change of outlook. Most of us were brought up not merely to play with toy soldiers and to learn history as a record of campaigns and battles, but to regard military prowess as the supreme example of heroic virtue and the Christian warrior as an ideal type of manhood. Poetry, painting, music, pageantry and religion have combined to invest the soldier with romance: military efficiency has been accepted as the proof of a civilization's worth and the arbitrament of arms as the ultimate test of righteousness. Moreover, in recent times science, by an unfortunate and largely unfair distortion of Darwin's doctrine of

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evolution, has been made to serve the same end; and the survival of the fittest has been identified with the power to slay. Few of us realize the extent to which this glorification of war distorts our thinking, or find it easy to clear our minds of cant and glamour on the subject. The "defence complex," as Dr. Delisle Burns<sup>1</sup> calls it, is deep-seated.

No one will deny that pugnacity and fear of what lies beyond the frontier still play a large part in our nature. Man at his best is much more than a fighting animal, but aggressiveness is a basal and, rightly treated, a valuable element in his constitution. It remains a sad fact that Christian civilization which has done its best to repress the creative instinct of sex has too often fostered the destructive instinct of aggression not by sublimating its expression but by pandering to its excesses. Nor would we deny that war has played a huge part in the shaping of human history and has called out qualities of high and splendid value. Yet neither the historian nor the scientist can honestly maintain that survival value is determined by ability to attack or defend: the rocks are full of extinct creatures whose immunity or savagery was their destruction; the future belongs neither to the

<sup>1</sup> In his trenchant analysis, *War*, pp. 1-22.

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elephant nor the tiger:<sup>1</sup> the great warriors have not moulded man's character nor in the long run shaped his destiny; Jeremiah and St. Paul have exercised an influence far greater than that of Nebuchadnezzar or the Cæsars: the Jews have survived; their persecutors from Pharaoh to Hitler pass, unlamented. Nor can it be questioned that life would be the poorer if the great epics of warfare, the Iliad and the Sagas, the psalms and lyrics of battle, the romances and records of heroic valour were forgotten or expunged. To claim that war is evil is not to dispute that warriors can be saints, or that the trade of arms requires from its votaries a discipline in obedience, courage, self-sacrifice. Those of us who had experience of men under fire will never forget or wish to conceal our reverence for their quality as this was revealed when they were stripped of every artificiality, of all the securities and shams that cloak the naked self: cheerfulness, fortitude, comradeship—if war brought out streaks of ugliness, it also confirmed our faith in human nature and testified to the virtue which adversity discovers even in the worst of us. If war is a beastly business, this is largely due to the fact that those who

<sup>1</sup> I have not dealt at length with this question because it is discussed in my book *Is War Obsolete?*, pp. 125-51, and by Mr. Gerald Heard, *The Source of Civilization*.

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take part in it are not beasts but men.

The conviction that war is and always has been evil is not shaken by the recognition that here as elsewhere man can triumph over his environment. The change that has taken place is in fact largely due to the contrast between the quality of the human material displayed in war and the uses to which that material is sacrificed. War is seen to be a wastage, a misuse, a prostitution of lives fitted for better and creative ends. War does not create: it corrupts both the individual and the society. Love, truth, beauty—these are the creative elements in life; and war destroys them all. If our faith is, as every Christian will maintain, centred in God as love, in the Word of truth, and in the beauty of holiness, then war is always and absolutely to be condemned. The real case against it is not so much that it involves killing: for those who believe in immortality it is arguable that to kill may be less evil than to debauch—though there is a finality about destroying life which sets it apart from all other crimes. Nor is the infliction of suffering the main count: for the Christian suffering, the love that gives, lies near to the heart of reality; the Cross redeems—though this does not justify the crucifiers. Still less is it the destruction of material resources and treasures; man does not

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live by bread alone, though it is difficult to over-estimate the stunting of human life due to the squandering of wealth upon instruments of destruction and the impoverishment of culture by their agency. For the Christian the case against war goes deeper.

War destroys the essential fellowship which exists and should be fostered between human beings as children of God and members one of another. We have lately come to see more plainly the basic importance of personality and of personal relationships—that it is in the contact of person with person that the individual becomes truly human, that the integration of the whole self and of “selves” in the community is the secret of “life and life abundant,” that love in the highest sense of that word is the source and crown of all virtues. The Christian doctrine of God centres not upon “philosophic” attributes such as delighted, and seduced, the Greek Fathers—omnipotence, changelessness, infinity and the like—but upon the personal qualities symbolized by love and life and light. The doctrine of the Incarnation bears witness to the sanctity of personality as the unique medium capable of revealing the Son of God. The Holy Spirit is primarily manifested in the *koinonia*, the communion and community of believers, the blessed society which is the

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body of Christ. This primary tenet of our faith is outraged and blasphemed by war.

The first lesson of war is to learn to hate, as every Manual of Training and every sergeant instructor insists. The soldier, like the civil population, must be taught to deny every human quality to his enemy; to forget that he is a creature of like passions, needs and decencies with ourselves; to caricature his merits and exaggerate his vices until he becomes a monster, bestial, ravening, hunnish. To recall the slogans and sentiments which the vast majority of us not only assented to but batted upon in the years of war is to realize of what depravity human beings can be capable. There may have been some who were able to kill and still to love; and certainly the fighting soldier was on occasion aware of a fellowship of suffering with his foe: but it remains true that war is organized hate, and could not continue for a week except by the deliberate rejection of the "golden law."

To foster hate is to foster lies. If war is a sin against love, it is equally a sin against truth. For hatred involves the blinding of oneself to all true recognition either of oneself or of one's enemy. Not only is he wholly wrong, but we are wholly right. To maintain the necessary passion a people must be fed with falsehoods—

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falsehoods that range from suppression of all that can be said in extenuation of the other side to the invention of "atrocities" and the devotion of every instrument of propaganda to their publication. Evidence, which most of us still refuse to read,<sup>1</sup> exists in abundance to prove how cynically and maliciously news was falsified and all that could inflame the lust for blood manufactured. The very folks who were proclaiming their clean hands and chivalrous hearts were giving currency to stories known to be false and insinuations devilish in their suggestiveness. In these days when press and wireless exert an almost unlimited power to hypnotize even the most honest, war provides the best excuse for them to destroy man's sense of truth.

If modern propaganda has added a new horror to war, the progress of science has equally intensified its ugliness. In the more superficial sense the warriors of former ages were at least picturesque; a battalion in gas-masks has not even the *diablerie* of a nightmare of hell. That is why Dr. Jacks is right in protesting against the use of the sword as a synonym for modern militarism. The "gentleman's weapon" has beauty of its own, and may well survive along with Indian clubs in the furniture of a gym-

<sup>1</sup> e.g. that contained in Lord Ponsonby's *Falsehood in War-time*.



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nasium. The true symbol of recent war is that displayed on the memorial to the Royal Artillery at Hyde Park Corner, a squat and loathsome howitzer, sniffing with blind and lascivious muzzle for its human victims, a thing more obscene than the Minotaur. And if the panoply and symbolism are hideous, so is the reality of which they are the sacraments. It is indeed a pity that the same word should be used to describe the ordered tourneys of the age of chivalry and the mass murders of civilians that have taken their place. War as we now prepare for it is not a matter of heroism, but of butchery, the smashing into poisoned pulp of the innocent and the defenceless, the stamping out of all semblance of humanity by torture and panic, the destruction of every decent human quality in victors and vanquished alike.

War is evil, and for the Christian a flat denial of his faith. That is, I am convinced, the belief of every thinking person outside the Churches. They realize, more clearly than we do, that by no ingenuity of exegesis can the teaching and life of Jesus be reconciled with war as it is to-day, and they are amazed that we who profess discipleship have not made that discovery long ago. Why is it that we have been so slow to acknowledge it?

There are two main excuses for our hesita-

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tion. Until lately the Old Testament stood alongside the New as inspired, authoritative, inerrant; and large portions of the Old Testament glorify the God of Battles rather than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. A people, brought up at home and in Sunday School upon the legends of Israel, taught to reverence Jael, the murderess of Sisera, and Samuel hewing Agag in pieces, and David "the bloodthirsty and lascivious brigand," absorbed the outlook of these savageries and failed to realize that they represented a time and a faith utterly remote from that of Christ. Protestantism has not yet outgrown its bibliolatry: Catholicism still professes it. If Scripture as a whole is infallible, then warfare has its sanction.

It is largely upon this subservience to the Old Testament that the traditional doctrine of the "just war" is based. That "just war" did not originally mean "righteous war" is of course acknowledged by all competent students. As employed by lawyers and canonists the term meant only a real war as opposed to private feuds and filibustering. But when the conditions which allowed the Christian to take part in such a war were defined, a moral element naturally crept in. If to Thomas Aquinas<sup>1</sup> a just war is primarily one fought at the com-

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theol.*, II, 2, Q. 40.

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mand of the proper authority, it is also to be for a righteous cause and a worthy end.<sup>1</sup> Moreover he adds a quotation from Augustine as to the spirit in which it is to be waged—"the desire to injure, cruelty in taking revenge, an implacable temper, savagery in attack, lust for dominion, these and the like are rightly condemned"—which would certainly rule out all modern wars. It is significant that in support of his contention that in a "just war" Christians may legitimately bear arms, Aquinas quotes as his Scriptural authority only the words of John the Baptist and the argument from silence, that Christ did not insist before healing his servant that the centurion must resign his commission—an argument which could be used to prove that Christ approved the extortions of Zacchæus.

That war is essentially evil is a conclusion to which it seems evident that the Churches are unanimously assenting. Out of the numerous resolutions recently passed by representative Christian authorities testifying to this unanimity, it is sufficient to quote those of the special Committee appointed by the Church of Scotland whose Report was approved by the General Assembly in May 1937, and of the Sub-

<sup>1</sup> Few Christians except the present Bishop of London would accept Machiavelli's definition, "The necessary war is the just war."

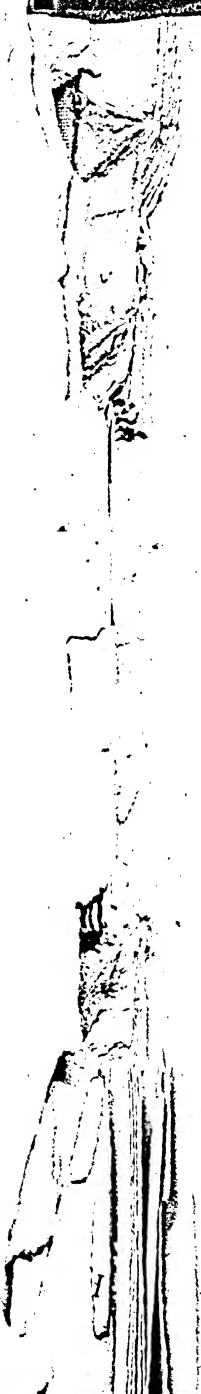
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Commission of the Oxford Conference in July of the same year. The Scottish Report is, as might be expected from its signatories, a thorough and judicious survey, stating with admirable skill both the pacifist and the non-pacifist position. Between these the Committee was sharply divided. It was of one mind in declaring that:

All are agreed on the hatefulness of war and on its inadequacy as a means of securing justice and the enduring solution of any conflict of international interests. . . . All are agreed that war in its effects on individuals is an unspeakable outrage on human personality, and that for nations, even though they be but partially Christian, to resort to arms in order to achieve a national advantage or in obedience to imperialistic demands is to do despite to the very foundations of the rule of God. War raises more problems and more serious problems than those it seeks to settle; and the experience of the world in the last war has taught us that for its successful prosecution it relies on massed suggestion and on campaigns of lies and deceit. It rouses such antagonisms as make it hardly possible to view the enemy as a brother man for whom Christ died. . . . All are agreed that until war is banished the kindly blessings of peace are hindered from coming to fruition, and that it is contrary to the will of God that men should spend in war and in preparation for war that wealth of the earth's products which God gave for the sustenance and uplift of man.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was the Oxford Report, though its attitude towards the Christian's duty in time of war was

<sup>1</sup> *The Church's Attitude to Peace and War*, p. 3. (S.C.M. Press.)



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even more multiform, less agreed in its condemnation.

Wars, the occasions of war, and all situations which conceal the fact of conflict under the guise of outward peace, are incidents in a world to which the Church is charged to proclaim the Gospel of redemption. War involves compulsory enmity, diabolical outrage against human personality, and a wanton distortion of the truth. War is a particular demonstration of the power of sin in this world and a defiance of the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. No justification of war must be allowed to conceal or minimize this fact.


That the conscience of mankind, as it becomes daily familiar with the physical, moral and spiritual effects of modern militarism, will endorse this verdict, can surely be taken for granted. Indeed, strong as it is, it may well appear so obvious as hardly to need emphasizing. We insist upon it not only because it represents a conviction almost revolutionary if compared with the utterances of Christians of every nation and almost every Church in 1914, but because paper resolutions, however commonplace, are only of value if they are taken to heart and translated into action. The fate of the Kellogg Pact<sup>1</sup> and of the Sanctions clauses in the Covenant of the League of Nations warns us how wide is the gulf between

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Delisle Burns, *War*, pp. 124-5.

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proclamation and performance, where deep-seated habits of thought have to be changed. So long as our mentality is obsessed by the conviction that war is necessary and glorious, so long as education, public life and religion actively foster its prestige, so long as the clichés of a false patriotism are stamped indelibly upon each new generation, pious protests are of little avail. We shall merely become accustomed to the new frightfulness as we have become accustomed to speculative finance or the death-toll of the roads; and the glamour of aerial combat will blind us to the indiscriminate killing that is its objective. If Christians are going to take the condemnation of war seriously, there is a vast need for service and concentrated effort.



In certain areas of that field they could even now exert a real influence; and probably education and, above all, the teaching of history is the most immediately appropriate. If war is evil, the Christian teacher will surely demonstrate his belief by giving to the victories of peace a place in his presentation of events. For mankind in the past century the invention of the bicycle was more important than the creation of the British Empire, the foundation of Queen's College for Women than the Crimean War, the lives of Livingstone or Lister than those of almost any of the "Great Vic-

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torians"; how much notice does any one of these receive in our history books? If the causes of war lie deep in the social, economic and political structure of society, then the effort to study and analyse and estimate these causes ought not to be ignored or, when attempted, denounced as subversive and Communistic. If peace is our objective, we ought at least to question the educational justification of the Officers' Training Corps and to refuse to turn our Speech Days into recruiting meetings. No doubt something in some schools has been done, and well done: but in an activity so intimately connected with the work of the Church and so potent in its influence upon the future, much more radical changes are necessary.

But the main cause for anxiety lies nearer to the Churches themselves. They agree that war is evil. That will count for little so long as they cannot agree upon any steps to be taken to remedy that evil, or decide to what degree the Christian can associate himself with it. So long as they are unable to reach any agreement on these points, their power to influence public opinion will remain negligible; their claim to interpret the mind of God will be self-condemned; their unity and co-operation will be imperilled. So long as some Christians maintain that to refuse to fight is to reject the divine

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ordering of the world and the State's God-given authority; and others that war, though evil, may well be the lesser of two evils, and that to renounce it is to give opportunity to violence and condone iniquity; and others that military force is at present a necessity and if used for the establishment of collective justice analogous to police action; and others that under no circumstances can they countenance or take part in it, the Christian witness does not carry much conviction, and may well be held to vitiate any pretension to a special revelation. Moreover, in view of the urgency of the issue at stake and of the strength and sincerity with which the various positions are maintained, the whole world-wide movement and the individual denominations are threatened with schism.

It is this last danger which makes the subject of such pressing importance for Christendom. We have seen that a new appreciation of the reality of the Universal Church has in fact emerged. We know that steps are being taken to give our oneness in Christ more effective expression. But the fact remains that on the question of war a fresh cleavage is by no means improbable. Already we have seen charges of heresy met by charges of apostasy: already the various groups are being drawn together in an allegiance which cuts across existing frontiers. It is probable that



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if Europe became again involved in war a pacifist secession from all the Churches would take place on a large scale and that the seceders would constitute a sect of their own. If, as has often been asserted, its attitude towards war is the acid test of the survival or fall of the Church as an institution commanding popular respect, it is even more evident that disagreement about it may well destroy the present prospect of co-operation and still further mutilate the divided body of Christ.

## CHAPTER IV

### IS WAR INEVITABLE?

To state that war is evil, is at once to raise the whole question of the nature of evil; the extent to which on earth the Christian is justified in believing that it can be overcome; and the means by which he is called to promote that end. Here at the outset of any inquiry into the Christian's attitude towards war we are met by the deep-seated contrast between Continental and British or, still more, American theology. To consider this is at once to enter upon the deepest and most controversial problems of theology—the nature of man, the scope and effects of sin, the meaning and method of redemption, and consequently the character and purpose of God. It is also to deal with the very practical question as to whether war can or cannot be rightly isolated from other and cognate manifestations of sin, whether we are to work for the elimination of war as a "limited objective" or must recognize that it can only disappear when a complete transformation of humanity has taken place. It further involves consideration of the function of the State in

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relation to the Church and of the Christian's proper obligation to his nation: war is primarily an affair of the State, and the degree to which he recognizes the State as a divinely authorized institution will influence his decision as to the point at which he may disobey its command.

Into the theological aspect of these questions it is impossible to enter fully: to do so would be to write a treatise upon the most difficult and disputable of Christian doctrines. It is enough to remind ourselves that in the early years of the fifth century the debate as to the relation of God to the world, previously discussed with reference to the Incarnation, was extended to the field of the operation of grace upon mankind. The contrast between divine and human had already become fixed; so when the British monk Pelagius, horrified at the moral depravity of Rome, insisted that man was not so corrupted by sin as to be incapable of free co-operation with God, his efforts brought down upon him the obloquy of the orthodox and gave occasion to Augustine to formulate his doctrine of determinism. Adam's fall had corrupted not only his descendants but the whole order of nature: the world was a mass of perdition: every child was literally born in sin by reason both of its inherited taint and of the sinfulness of the act

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of procreation: baptism was the appointed remedy and supernatural grace the sole agent of regeneration: the good works of the unbaptized were not good but evil, and the bestowal of grace was conditioned not by any human merit or response but by God's inscrutable fiat. As against Pelagius Augustine prevailed; but his teaching on the subject was never officially endorsed and in practice Catholicism has never accepted it.

At the Reformation Luther's devotion to St. Paul, from whose Epistles the proof-texts for predestination were taken, and his assertion of salvation by faith alone as against the theory of merit and the value of works gave his theology a strongly deterministic bent. In spite of his noble insistence upon the divine ordering of the secular world, nature and grace were widely sundered in his teaching. It only needed the legal and logical genius of Calvin to restate the Augustinian position and to rivet it firmly upon the Protestant Churches. The Confessions of the Continent and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England have a strongly anti-Pelagian emphasis; and in the seventeenth century Calvinism became the general orthodoxy of Reformed Communion. The struggle against it fills much of the subsequent history of these churches: in Britain its ascendancy has long

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been overthrown—*testimonium animæ naturaliter Pelagianæ*—but on the Continent, while seldom accepted in its full rigour, it still fills the background of thought on the nature of man; and lately Dr. Barth has powerfully restated both its scriptural authority and its religious significance.

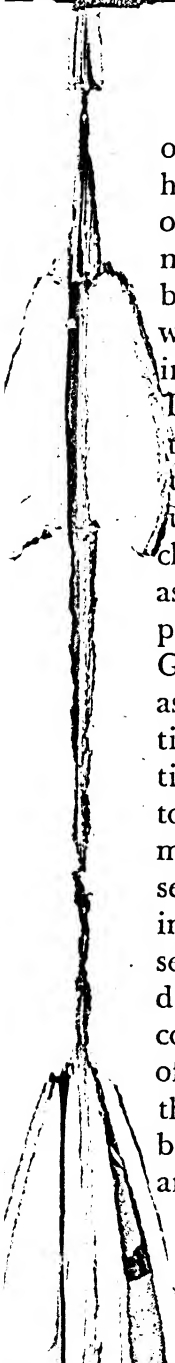
It is important, particularly for us to whom such teaching is not naturally congenial, to recognize the permanent value of this position. Egoism, pride, self-reliance, complacency—this is the fundamental sin; penitence, the recognition that “in us dwells no good thing” and that “our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” is the condition of forgiveness; the vision of God, from which alone penitence can spring, is impossible except to the pure in heart who have been released from self-regard; in our deepest moments we acknowledge our creaturehood, our dependence, our worthlessness; a shallow view of evil, any minimizing of the scope and effects of sin, involves an assertion of man’s autonomy and of his apostasy.

This conviction, which would be acknowledged by all Christians, is held by some to carry the corollaries that where there is no conscious conversion, no explicit act of faith, there is no remedy for corruption and no religious value in thought or action; that in consequence the

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natural order, the secular life, the efforts for social, economic and political amelioration are in themselves irrelevant to religion; that Christianity is essentially an individual renunciation of this world and all its ways; and that the Kingdom of God cannot be advanced by any human endeavour or come until human history is brought to an end by a divine and apocalyptic act. Such a faith, strongly other-worldly in its emphasis and pietistic in its quality, maintains intact the rigid separation between the natural and the supernatural, the world and the Church, the secular and the religious, which it has been for the past century the intention of the most typical British theologians to overthrow. That it has behind it a great weight of Biblical authority, that it safeguards the uniqueness and sole-sufficiency of Christ, that it accords well with the evil of our times and our own impotence, and that it gives precision and urgency to the proclaiming of the gospel, is manifest.

To take such a view is to put a very different estimate upon war from that with which most of us are familiar. War, though evil, is only in that respect typical of the whole natural order which it is the Christian's business not to think that he can redeem but to renounce and escape from. It may in its present form be a signal manifestation of that evil: if so, it will open



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our eyes to the universal fact of corruption and help us to realize the inevitable consequences of sin. There is ground neither in Scripture nor in experience for the belief that war can be eliminated, and in any case its disappearance will only take place when sin is swallowed up in victory by the triumphant return of the Lord. To concentrate attention upon it or to isolate it from the rest of our sinful environment is to suggest that sins can be cured piecemeal, to substitute a call to particular effort for a challenge to whole-hearted surrender, and to assume for man's planning and activity an importance which derogates from the majesty of God. We must accept war as we accept disease, as a condition inherent in the world's corruption, a demonstration of the need for redemption, a part of the environment in which we are to make the venture of faith. Emphasis upon material welfare and social betterment is a secular appeal which grossly exaggerates the importance of this world, encourages men to seek their salvation in worldly activities and distracts them from what should be their sole concern, surrender and obedience to the Word of God. In any case it is only the preaching of that Word that is the Church's task, and only by the conversion of individuals to it that war and sin can be overcome.

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It is difficult even for one who cannot accept either its theological basis or its practical conclusions not to feel a profound reverence for the majesty, austerity and simplicity of such a faith. It has inspired its followers to make a magnificent stand against the encroachments of secularism as against the pressure of the totalitarian state. It maintains in an age when they are easily ignored the uncompromising element in the New Testament, the readiness to count the world well lost, to forsake all things for Christ, and to look away from the tragedies and futilities of the time to the unshakable certainties of God. It contradicts the temptation to appraise spiritual worth in terms of mundane activity and success, to equate the Kingdom of God with a reign of prosperity and peace, to store up treasure in this world and prefer the temporal to the eternal. Such a protest must not be set down as a mere refuge, a psychological compensation against despair, a reflection of the pessimism and nervous exhaustion of the age. It recaptures for us the authentic note of revivalism, of a Jeremiah or a Savonarola, indicting the civilization of his day as a snare and an illusion. And that is a message which we badly need.

Nevertheless, by many of us the initial contentions of the position cannot be accepted. We



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cannot reconcile its estimate of nature or of man with the best thought of the Old Testament, with the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels, with a full appreciation of St. Paul, or, in the last resort, with belief in the Incarnation and with an incarnational and sacramental view of the universe. In addition, it appears to perpetuate an inadequate and fundamentalist attitude towards Scripture and religion by reaffirming a radical dualism between sacred and secular,<sup>1</sup> to confine the operation of the Holy Spirit to certain "covenanted" and ecclesiastical channels, to deny the importance of history and to leave no room for any human co-operation with God. Moreover, and explicitly, it perverts the significance of the Christian hope by substituting a denial that the Kingdom can come within history for an expectation of its immediate advent. The whole ethos of such a faith is one of pessimism, almost of despair, utterly unlike the joy and confidence of the New Testament or the earliest Church. If its phrasing is closer to tradition than ours, its character seems appropriate to the mind rather of the sixteenth century than of the first or the twentieth.

Yet while for us the conclusions of this

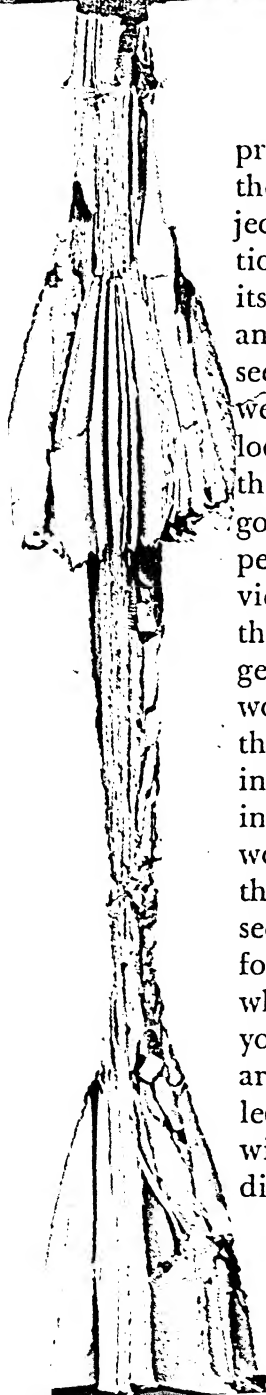
<sup>1</sup> This came out very clearly at the Oxford Conference when the Continental delegates insisted on confining religious education to the teaching of the Bible and rejecting the view that religion must be coextensive with the whole activities of a school.

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theology are not more acceptable than its premisses, there is one point in them on which some of us have long felt hesitation and which draws support from many who do not share the Christian position. This is, of course, the question whether we can rightly isolate and concentrate upon war.

All of us would, I imagine, agree that particular sins are only symptoms of a disease, and that for the physician to deal with them one by one is generally futile. If war is a signal manifestation of sin, yet it can in fact hardly be separated from similar and cognate manifestations, from industrial and economic conflicts, or from the exploitation and coercion of subject classes and races. Can we hope to check the instinct of aggression from breaking out into armed strife except by radical changes in the constitution of individuals and the body politic? Is there not much to be said for those who argue that war is inevitably endemic in the present competitive social order, and that only by overthrowing that order can there be any securing of peace? Is there any room for palliatives, for policies that would seek to remove one symptom of evil while leaving untouched and even exacerbating others?

Such considerations affect not only our general attitude towards war but our concrete



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programme for dealing with it. Christians, if they have given any serious thought to the subject, would certainly agree that a mere denunciation of or pledge to abstain from war was in itself useless; that it was necessary to examine and understand the causes which at present seem to make wars inevitable; that these causes were deeply involved in the structure and outlook of society; and that in the long run only the revolutionary change demanded by the gospel would be effective in securing a true peace. They would be careful, whatever their views upon the question of pacifism, to insist that positive rather than negative methods for getting rid of war must be employed. They would realize that a thorough investigation of the subject would include wide and complicated inquiries into problems many of them seemingly remote from the matter in hand. They would be on their guard against minimizing the claims of the gospel or suggesting that to secure peace was equivalent to or a substitute for the regeneration of mankind. Here as elsewhere, they would realize that at whatever point you attempt to deal with evil its manifestations are so interlocked that you will ultimately be led to deal not with them but with evil itself, with sin, with the self-centredness of the individual and of society.

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But they would deny that there was any inconsistency in proclaiming the need for complete conversion and insisting that such conversion must show itself in dealing with particular issues. Indeed they would insist that without such concrete and limited objectives discipleship becomes vague, ineffective, sentimental. The insistence upon the test of fruits, upon the doing of the work and upon special tasks, is characteristic of the method of Jesus. For He combined an unlimited demand with a patient and ready welcoming of definite acts that indicated an awakening of response. His own method was plainly "step by step"; whatever glimpses of fuller life men might have must be given expression in action; then further vision and larger activity would be possible. Where men were confronted with clearly acknowledged obligations, those obligations must as a matter of life or death be discharged: the man with one talent must not let it lie idle in the hope that some day he would possess ten. Jesus would not refuse the crumbs because the whole loaf could not yet be offered.

This working out of the full gospel stage by stage has been characteristic of Christian history as it is of the progress of the individual believer. At a particular period some one dominant issue challenges the conscience: if we say "I cannot

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deal with this, because it is only a partial and incomplete expression of my devotion," the opportunity passes, and we have failed and cease to grow. If it is taken, powers are exercised and principles discovered which inevitably lead on to and enable wider ventures in the future. A classic and for our purpose very relevant example is the familiar case of Wilberforce and the slave-trade. Wilberforce, whose creed might well be called narrow and other-worldly, saw the iniquity of negro-slavery and set himself to remove it. Cobbett was justified in accusing him of being "the worst enemy of the English people," not for his activities against the slave-dealers of Bristol and Liverpool, but for his blindness to the enslavement of women and children in the mills and mines of the new industrialism. But he persisted in concentrating upon the one thing that he saw, and in that field not only succeeded, but established certain principles as to the worth of personalities and the wickedness of exploitation, which his followers speedily applied to the evils to which he had been blind. If there had been no Wilberforce there would have been no Shaftesbury. That is perhaps sufficient answer to those who refuse to isolate and concentrate upon war.

But there is more to be said. The warning that we cannot deal with symptoms is timely if

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by it is meant that we cannot deal with them alone or without reference to the causes from which they spring. Psychology and Christianity warn us that mere repression is useless: it is impossible and dangerous (as the Church ought to have discovered in dealing with sex) to seek to prevent the expression of an instinctive urge: it cannot be crushed; it can be redirected into new outlets. Many of us have long been convinced that war will only cease to hold its place as the supreme opportunity for testing manhood, as the great adventure that releases us from monotony and security, if it is replaced by a moral equivalent that makes larger and more worthy demands. A great part of the work against war must consist in the discovery and commendation of such alternatives. Christianity should have little difficulty in providing them; and it should be the task of all teachers and publicists to see that they are attractively presented. There are in fact innumerable such alternatives in which men and women can give their lives and find full scope for their valour. A few were suggested in reference to the teaching of history.

That this process of redirection and sublimation is already going on to a degree little recognized by authority, is clear to anyone who knows the younger generation. When Lord

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Lloyd declares that the army is not getting officers because we are war-weary and temporarily decadent, he does not know those of whom he speaks. The fact is, of course, that the best of them do not take commissions partly because war seems to them a loathsome trade, partly because they find other avenues to adventure more inspiring. They have outgrown the childish ambition to paint the map pink, the devilish faith in "my country right or wrong," the feudal outlook upon the British raj. They love their country, its hill-sides and woods, its slums and slum-dwellers far more deeply than the average imperialist. Numbers of them spend their vacations in Dockland or the derelict areas; numbers in Iceland or Spitzbergen, and afterwards in the Antarctic or Tibet. Medicine, social service at home and abroad, scientific exploration, education, the churches—these are all getting men of the best type, physically and mentally. They are men finding a moral equivalent to war in fields of creative and internationally valuable activity. The Army!—if war broke out, they might feel constrained to join it: they would do so with shame and disgust. That a large proportion—larger probably than most of us suspect—would refuse military service under any circumstances is probable; and the number would be increased if the war did not

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seem to them inevitable and altruistic. Whether the Christian method of dealing with evil sanctions or condemns such refusal is, of course, for most of us the crux of this whole problem. It will be considered later. We must first deal with the third of the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter, the authority of the State and the obligation of the individual towards it.



## CHAPTER V

### THE CLAIMS OF THE STATE

"THE State is the agent divinely appointed to preserve a nation from the detrimental effects of anarchic and criminal tendencies amongst its members and to maintain its existence against the aggression of its neighbours. It is therefore a Christian's duty to obey the political authority as far as possible and to refrain from everything that is apt to weaken it. This means that normally a Christian must take up arms for his country."<sup>1</sup> Such sentences framed to express the Lutheran point of view would yet commend themselves to many Christians of other churches. Indeed for us all the conflict of loyalties created when the demands of conscience and of citizenship, of individual conviction and of corporate obligation pull us in opposite directions presents a tension agonizing in itself and often seemingly incapable of satisfactory resolution.

It is easy, and up to a point justifiable, to point out that such an attitude to the State is utterly alien to the British temper and tradition. Have we not for generations laughed at the con-

<sup>1</sup> Oxford Conference Report.

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trast between the German's respect, not to say servility, towards officials and the law and our own smiles at City Councillors and scorn of red tape? Is it not true that bureaucracy is honoured on the Continent and detested in England; that *Verboten* is to us a direct incentive to trespass; that the rebels at the Marble Arch are the pride and safety-valve of our national life; that in fact we regard the State as a bore rather than a blessing? Such at least is our pose—the pose of a people at heart not less law-abiding nor less snobbish than its neighbours. If the problem of the State's claims to obedience presents itself to us in a somewhat different form it is perhaps equally acute: indeed in a democracy the citizens ought to feel a larger responsibility than in an autocracy.

In Germany the right of the State to claim the military service of its citizens depends upon two deep-seated and curiously contrasted religious convictions. On the one hand there is the point already noted that secular affairs are if not irrelevant to the Christian at least of very secondary importance. He can obey the call of God irrespective of his social status or environment, in a despotism not less than in a democracy. It is not true that he is not interested in politics or social righteousness, but these are essentially

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worldly interests and hardly enter into the sphere proper to religion. When our delegates to Stockholm in 1925 reported that the Lutheran Churches were two generations behind us in their sociological thinking, they failed to realize that this was due not to lack of concern but to a theology which drew a hard line between mundane and spiritual interests.

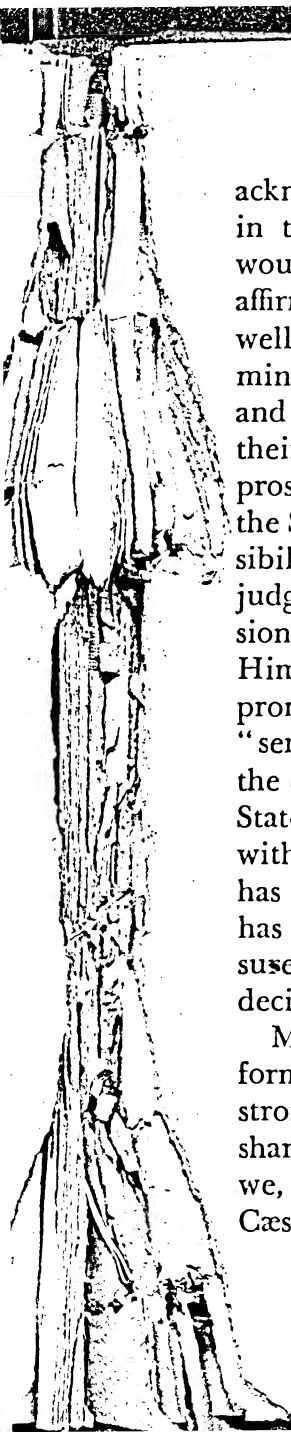
But there is a further point which enforces from a different angle a similar conclusion. Luther, if he regarded the world as a province apart and its works as giving no ground for man's spiritual status, yet felt and stated plainly that in the secular sphere there were "orders," the family and the State, divinely authorized for the maintenance of society. In this sphere Cæsar and his representatives had the right and responsibility of government, a right deriving not from men but from God. That the great Reformer rebelling against Papal supremacy gave to princes a dignity almost papal in its power (*cuius regio eius religio*) is a curious fact which has been of immense significance in the history of nationalism. The divine right of kings was not an invention of the Stuarts.

Nor is it just to ascribe his teaching to political expediency, though the Peasants' War and his personal necessities certainly gave strength to it. He drew it from the New

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Testament, from Christ's answer "Render unto Cæsar," from St. Paul's admonition to be in subjection to the powers that be, as ordained of God and God's ministers (Rom. xiii. 1-10), and from St. Peter's similar instruction with regard to the emperor and his governors (1 Peter ii. 13-17). That he was prepared to fasten upon these texts, to give to the first of them a significance which it can hardly bear, and to ignore the references to the Empire which carried a different meaning, is only in keeping with the vigour and individualism of his character. That, like St. Paul, he was acting with real statesmanship in insisting upon obedience in a time of civil unrest and for communities feeble and insecure, is obvious. And if it is argued that it is unreasonable to accept guidance for the large and long-established churches of to-day based upon passages appropriate to the tiny assemblies of the Apostolic and Reformation periods, the reply may well be that though many of us would certainly reject his arguments there is much to be said in support of his conclusions.

Those who hold that there is no absolute disparity between nature and grace, that the operation of the Holy Spirit is to be found in other religions as well as in the Christian, and in other ministries beside the ecclesiastical, will give to the vocation of government a full



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acknowledgment of its divinely appointed place in the scheme of human affairs. Indeed we would go further than George Herbert and affirm that every calling that ministers to the well-being of mankind is in some sense a sacred ministry, and that only as we come to realize and act upon this, testing all our activities by their conformity to the will of God, is there any prospect of real progress. We would give to the State and its officers a high place and responsibility; for we and they together are under the judgment of God and capable, indeed commissioned, to become "workers together with Him." This does not mean that we claim or promise a blind obedience: each one of us must "serve God rather than men." It ought to warn the ecclesiastic against any light rejection of the State's behests or against any undue interference with its sphere of ministry. The expert who has found his life's work in a particular task has a right to be respected: we must be very sure of our ground before we challenge his decisions.

Moreover, in a democracy, the case for conforming to the commands of government is stronger than for those upon whom rests no share in its decisions. In a very real sense to-day we, the enfranchised citizens, are our own Cæsar. If our opinions are those of a minority,

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we have still constitutional means of ventilating and propagating them. It is no doubt true of every nation that it gets the sort of government that it deserves: but a people which has no political freedom will obviously yield a different kind of obedience to its rulers from that given by a free electorate. The duty to support an autocrat is morally far less strong than that which rests upon us in Britain. Democracy, even if it be satirized as involving belief in "the plenary inspiration of the odd man," must depend for its stability upon the general willingness of the citizens to accept and conform to the decisions of the majority; and it can appeal for such loyalty on the ground that it is the citizens themselves who are responsible for policy. Those who, whatever its faults, believe in it as the most appropriate type of constitution for a Christian community will realize that it can only be maintained if its findings are regarded as carrying a binding authority. We can, and as citizens must, do our best to secure that our views of what it ought to do shall be effectively advocated: if we fail to commend them, it can only be under very exceptional circumstances and on very compelling grounds that we may refuse to abide by the result.

In the matter of war this obligation is particularly strong. Christians will obviously

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claim that their government, like all other ministers whatever their function, indeed like all mankind, should "seek first God's Kingdom and righteousness." They will therefore expect that authority shall be exercised by the State not solely for the sake of promoting its own security and aggrandizement, but with a view to the fulfilling of God's will and for the benefit of all His human family. That the State serves no end except its own welfare is in fact an express repudiation of Christianity: however important its own perpetuation, however obvious and immediate its responsibility for its own citizens, that responsibility cannot be primary: its autonomy is subject to God's rule: any other concept amounts to a deification of Cæsar. But if this be granted and if, as we in this country would surely wish to admit, government is administered on such a condition and by men and women genuinely concerned for something more than their own people, it must be assumed that the State will only decide upon war or upon military measures if it has not only the support of a majority but a conviction that such a course is the best possible under the circumstances. When it is remembered that refusal to serve may not only involve the defeat of a cause which we believe to be righteous and the triumph of aggression, but will lay a greater burden and

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danger upon our fellows, the breaking of fellowship becomes almost intolerable to contemplate. It is not difficult to understand the position of those who say "By all means do your uttermost to prevent war and to persuade the country to disarm: but *if* war and a war of whose objects you cannot disapprove breaks out, then bow to the will of the majority and take your share in the struggle."<sup>1</sup>

The force of this argument on its moral and religious side would be much greater if it were generally agreed that the same ethical principles apply to States as to individuals, that man acting collectively is bound to obey and can obey the golden rule. Probably in Britain most of us would reject at once the view that Christian discipleship is possible only in the dealings of private persons one with another. We should repudiate the thesis of Dr. Niebuhr's book *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, as true only of the herd and not of the fellowship, and as flatly irreconcilable alike with our faith in the Church and our experience of the *koinonia*. But it must be recognized that large numbers of Christians maintain that the nature and purpose of the State make it impossible for it to act on fully Christian lines, and that in an

<sup>1</sup> This is briefly the position advocated by W. M. Watt, *Can Christians be Pacifists?*



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unredeemed society it is Utopian to expect politics to be conducted on the lines of the Sermon on the Mount. Moreover, it is plain fact that, unless the Christian is prepared to cut himself off from public affairs, he must needs act in partnership with men and policies which do not acknowledge or conform to Christian standards. For him his citizenship is a constant dilemma. A party or programme appeals to him as being on the whole desirous and capable of promoting his convictions: but because it is itself mixed in personnel and motives he will only accept loyalty to it at the cost of a continual tension. At present it does not seem clear that the formation of a Christian party would satisfactorily ease the situation; and the man who is conscious of civic responsibilities will therefore do his uttermost to co-operate with what approximates most closely to his sense of social righteousness. He must strive at once to keep clear his primary loyalty to the Master and yet be content as that Master was to accept such fellow-workers as are available and go with them as far as he possibly can without moral dishonesty.

It is then clear that though no Christian may pledge an unconditional obedience to any State or accept its orders without reference to the will of God, the obligation to respect them lies

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more heavily upon us than upon the citizens of other and less free countries. Most of us cannot go so far as our Lutheran brethren in drawing a frontier between the functions of Church and State, and certainly cannot give our consciences into the keeping of the civil power or absolve ourselves from the duty of intelligent scrutiny and criticism. In the matter of war there is, of course, a large number, probably a majority, of Christians in Britain whose views would not compel them to face the problem of divided loyalties should their country become involved. We shall consider the various positions which Christians here accept in later chapters. None of us would, I think, put our duty to the State in the forefront among the arguments which count with us. Certainly we should all refuse to agree that the question was closed for us when the State had spoken. It is therefore appropriate to consider at this stage of our argument the problem which every Christian has to face in some form or another and which becomes acute in the case of war, the problem as to how we are to estimate and decide between the claims of the individual conscience and of the collective fellowship. How can I determine to what extent it is my duty to maintain solidarity with my friends and countrymen, and at what point I must be prepared to separate my-

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self and stand alone? That there is such a point no Christian will deny: else the martyrs died in vain. To determine where it lies is always difficult and often agonizing.

We have already considered the obligations of loyalty to the State: but that is hardly the crux of the matter. It is rather what the State represents and enables—the common heritage of speech and custom, the common life of comradeship and friendliness, the memories and associations that bind men together, the love that finds it hard to face a breach of trust. Moreover, whether or no we approve of a particular government or policy, yet it has made possible our civic and national life, our security, our work, our homes. We have taken advantage of what others have made possible for us: can we, when our citizenship claims from us service in return, refuse that service without dishonour? Is not our willingness to fight part of the unwritten contract which we accept as members of a nation? Is not the love of the brethren, the readiness to suffer and die with them, the refusal to stand aloof and see them bear the brunt alone, a very real part of the love of God? It is not the mere herd-instinct of Galton's ox, nor the mass-hypnotism of propaganda, that makes many of us shrink from cutting ourselves off from the community; for

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the community is a good thing, and to it we owe a great part of ourselves.

Yet there comes a point, for those who are sensitive there constantly come points, at which our vision of God makes its protest. Here is a line of action accepted more or less thoughtlessly in the past, accepted without question by the majority of our fellows, in which we cannot acquiesce. Conscience awakes and confronts us with a challenge. If we are followers of Christ, and as such ready to admit His claim to our primary loyalty, we cannot dismiss the challenge unanswered: to do so is to reject it and Him. Indeed, every Christian would admit that it is a chief task of discipleship, and indeed of good citizenship, never to stifle a warning against compliance with public opinion, but rather to grow constantly more alert in the discovery of fresh points of protest. Otherwise we sink into a mere worldliness, and the approval of our fellows, good form, convention become our principles. The hope of progress depends on our increasing appreciation of real values, our increasing steadfastness in refusing to accommodate ourselves to low standards.

If this be so, then it follows that for the State not less than for the Church it is vital to foster the power of its citizens to fulfil the will of God as they see it. No doubt their power is limited,

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their vision defective, their practice inconsistent: no doubt such liberty of conscience may easily degenerate into licence and anarchic individualism. But those dangers are less serious than the certainty that if freedom is unduly checked, the general level of character will drop, progress will be inhibited, intelligence will stagnate, the people will become a mob falling victims to machine-made propaganda. The totalitarian states show how dangerous such a condition can be both to their own people and to the world. In these days and in a democracy it is the plain duty of us all to cultivate detachment and independence of mind.

To the Church such insistence should be a commonplace. God is not necessarily on the side of the majority—or of the big battalions. Indeed, as all the history of religion shows, it is by the protest and, if need be, the martyrdom of individuals standing alone against public opinion that God's will has been made plain. No Christian will claim that he is a prophet: every Christian accepts the prophet's responsibility to listen to the voice of the Lord and to proclaim what he hears in his life, if not upon his lips.

The dilemma thus seen is therefore easily resolved. It is simply a reminder that God's

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will must come first, that to seek to do God's will as revealed in Christ is the plain meaning of Christianity, and that for the Christian such service is the highest that he can give to God and man, to Church or State. Whatever our attitude towards war, we ought surely to agree so far, that no man, whether he fights or refuses to fight, can discharge his citizenship more nobly than by seeking to express by it his deepest convictions as to Christ's will for him. Of course he may be mistaken, ignorant, deluded; Church and State are within their rights in deciding that if his conscience brings him into conflict with them they can only refuse to allow him to continue as one of their members. But if he is sincere, the whole history of exclusiveness and of persecution, indeed as many would maintain the whole spirit of Christianity, warn them against a policy of coercion. Of course such people are a nuisance, a danger to the community, an unstable element not easily regimented or sure to vote with the crowd. The easy way, for those who prefer ease and smoothness of administration to progress and justice, is to arouse public hostility against them, to boycott their opinions and suppress their freedom. There may be times of crisis, there may be individuals so dangerously wrong-headed that such a course is inevitable. But to



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adopt it is to depart from the principles of democracy, and is irreconcilable with the example of Christ. He went to the Cross rather than deprive His contemporaries of the freedom to crucify Him; and though the Church has seldom dared to be equally generous, the tragic history of heresy is a warning that can hardly be disputed.

But such considerations do not ease the burden that rests upon the individual: indeed the greater the liberty, the greater the responsibility. It is one thing to exhort him to be a good citizen by seeking God's will in the matter of war: he would often be tempted to prefer escape from such a task by transferring to the State the duty of making up his mind for him—or if not to the State, may he not look to the Church? The issue is avowedly complicated. To deal honestly with it means much thought and study and prayer, and a time of tension and bewilderment that may well be full of pain.

It is of course the difficulty of the subject, not less than its urgency, that gives it its importance. The tension-points in life for individual and Church are the growing-points; and it is as we submit to the pain of concentrating upon them that we develop. It is certainly true to say that all those who think the problem easy—who take it as obvious that “every decent man

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will die for his country" or that "no Christian can refuse to be a pacifist"—are simply folks who have not troubled to examine the complexity of the issues or to free their minds from preoccupation with their own prejudices. It ought to be enough to remind such people that where men whose sincerity and intellectual power are as evident as their desire to be Christian disagree definitely and convincedly, the matter is not likely to be one which the man in the street can solve by writing to his local paper. The notions which such a man usually expresses—that all pacifists are sentimental cowards or that all non-pacifists are time-serving renegades—do credit neither to his religion nor to his common sense. The debate is not one to be lightly undertaken: it is a matter of life and death for the ecumenical movement and for the Churches that it should not on that account be postponed.





## CHAPTER VI

### WAR AND THE CHURCH

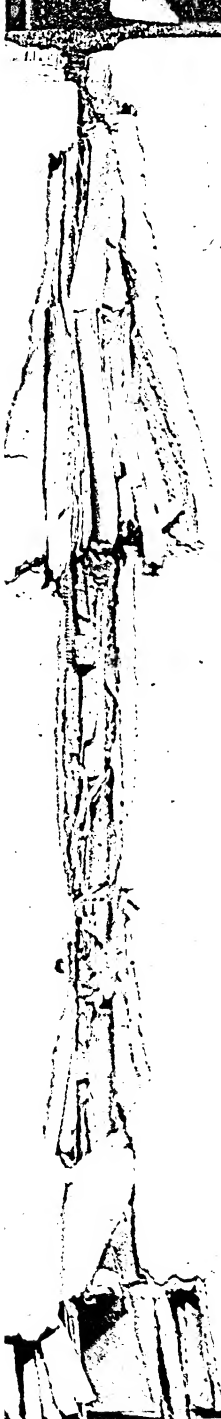
It was suggested in the last chapter that in a debate of this kind, where the common man cannot transfer to the State an unquestioned authority over his conscience, and recognizes, as every Christian must, his own unfitness to follow his private judgment, he should be able to look to the Church for clear and decisive guidance. What has already been said about the just war indicates that certain Churches, the Roman and Anglican, officially recognize the right of the Christian to "bear arms at the command of the magistrate and serve in the wars"; and until recently this would have been the almost universal opinion of all denominations except the Society of Friends who, from the days of George Fox, have always refused military service. Such a weight of tradition will be variously estimated: some will maintain that it is as near to a truly Catholic and authoritative agreement as in a divided Christendom we can expect, and that it therefore represents the strongest possible earthly guidance. Others will point out that such permission is a departure from the

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principles of the earliest Church, that a similar unanimity prevailed until last century in the matter of slavery, and that in any case it is an authorization not a command—"he may" not "he must"—and leaves the individual free to choose.

In any case, though most of us would regard the tradition as entitled to respect, few would consider it sacrosanct, both because of the change in the character of war, and because to-day in every church there exists an influential body of opinion definitely opposed to it. This minority is no longer negligible in any of the British denominations, and in America is almost certainly a majority; and it consists not of any one section of extremists or rebels, but of men and women differing widely in their doctrinal and ethical outlook on other matters. The minority varies in size in the various Churches. It is probably smallest in the Established Churches of England and Scotland, partly from their connection with the State, partly from their generally greater regard for tradition; small among the Baptists, where fundamentalist influence is still strong; large among Congregationalists and Methodists, bodies in which there has been for many years an important pacifist element.

For these reasons it is no longer possible to



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claim that on this issue the Church has spoken:<sup>1</sup> indeed the debates that have recently taken place in the Assemblies of several denominations reveal how deep is the cleavage in each of them.

When we press behind the findings of particular denominations to the sources of doctrine which they acknowledge, the situation does not become much less obscure. The New Testament as normative; the Old Testament as preparatory and to be interpreted in the light of the New; the witness of the Church and of particular theologians, those of the earlier and undivided Church being generally the most important; the interpretation of this evidence in recent years and by thinkers of repute—it is to such authorities that the Churches would turn in coming to a decision.

In the New Testament every passage that refers or can be held to refer to this problem has been scrutinized, discussed, interpreted and employed as an authority a hundred times during the past twenty years. Books have been devoted to the subject, and it appears inevitably in every Christian treatment of war. The result may be briefly summarized. There is no passage which can be held to regard war as any-

<sup>1</sup> Even in the Church of Rome the Encyclicals of the last two Popes make this true.

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thing but evil: there is no passage which explicitly forbids the soldier's calling, indeed there is definite commendation of the centurion's faith—though not of his profession: there is one incident, the use of a scourge of small cords in the Johannine account of the cleansing of the Temple, which has been held to prove that Christ employed physical violence: there is the parable of the strong man armed, who plainly stands for Satan: there is the saying "Let him sell his cloak and buy a dagger"—a warning perhaps metaphorical of the dangers shortly to come: there is the word "It is enough" in reply to the offer of two swords, which merely closes the subject and does not imply acceptance of the swords: there is the saying "He that takes the sword shall perish by the sword"—a truth but not a prohibition: there is the statement to Pilate that His servants will not fight because His Kingdom is not of this world: and there are the sayings in the Sermon on the Mount—which the Church has always declined to take literally, excepting the one about divorce. That is practically all; and enough has perhaps been said to indicate that the quotation of isolated texts is inconclusive, and that here as elsewhere Christ did not intend to legislate.

We have cited these utterances because they

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have played and continue to play so large a part in the debate. But, of course, the quotation of bare texts as if they were oracles or statutes is an inadequate method of arriving at the mind of the Master. If, as we have suggested, He combined a demand for whole-souled and unlimited discipleship ("Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect") with a refusal to make discipleship dependent upon any single fixed condition except repentance and willingness to forgive, it is entirely appropriate that He did not lay down any rigid rule about war or slavery or other specific evils. His religion was positive not negative—"thou shalt love" not "thou shalt not fight"—and we fail to appreciate Him if we complain that He does not answer our problem by an edict.

To discover His mind is to enter so far as we may into His Spirit, to let the significance of His life and death, His teaching and acts as we know them in the records and in their influence upon His followers, sink into ourselves, to reflect upon it and to confront our problems in the light of it. And that cannot be done by arming ourselves with a battery of quotations to fire off at those with whom we disagree.

Such a task is of course supremely difficult. Our own prejudices, our own imaginations enter into it: and we are too small, too stunted,

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to appreciate His stature. Consequently it is not surprising that even here men of goodwill and Christian scholarship differ widely—though they differ less in their estimate of His way of life than in the inferences which they draw from it as to their own. Probably few of them would doubt that in His deliberate refusal either to escape the Cross or to resist it Jesus implicitly denies that force can ever say the last word: that lies not with the Sanhedrin or with Pilate but with God. For Himself He refused the way of the Zealots; He refused to coerce obedience; He refused to defend Himself or to allow His followers to defend Him. That is clear—and it is clear also that by so doing He triumphed. So far we should all agree. We should agree, too, that it is this Christ suffering, killed and risen whom the Apostles preached as Saviour of the world; that in doing so they appealed to the strength of the weak, insisted upon peace and reconciliation, and exemplified their Master's injunction to love their enemies. If there is occasionally in their writings a note of vindictiveness, it jars with the whole ethos of the New Testament.

That is the case: but it does not therefore follow that we shall best show our discipleship by a literal imitation of His way. Have we the right, are we Christ-like enough to do what He

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did? Does not our possession of resources and responsibilities unknown to His early followers put us in a totally different position? Granted that He chose the way of non-resistance, is that a universal obligation? Or shall we best serve the cause of peace and righteousness by realizing that the attainment of the measure of the fullness of Christ is an age-long process, that it involves for us an inevitable measure of compromise and a step-by-step fulfilment of His will, and that in the present situation it may well be our true wisdom to realize that armed force is still a necessary instrument for His service?

It is, of course, plain that some degree of accommodation is necessary if we are to live in contact with and dependence upon a sinful world. Even the Apostles found their primitive Communism impracticable, and did not attempt to break away from the institution of slavery. We are challenged to seek perfection: but like the horizon it remains in the beyond: to overcome one mountain of evil is to open up fresh ranges demanding further efforts. The pioneers, the saints, press on ahead: for such rare prophetic souls a life of total non-resistance may be possible: most of us are not saints, nor capable of their withdrawal from the common life: and to imitate them literally would seem

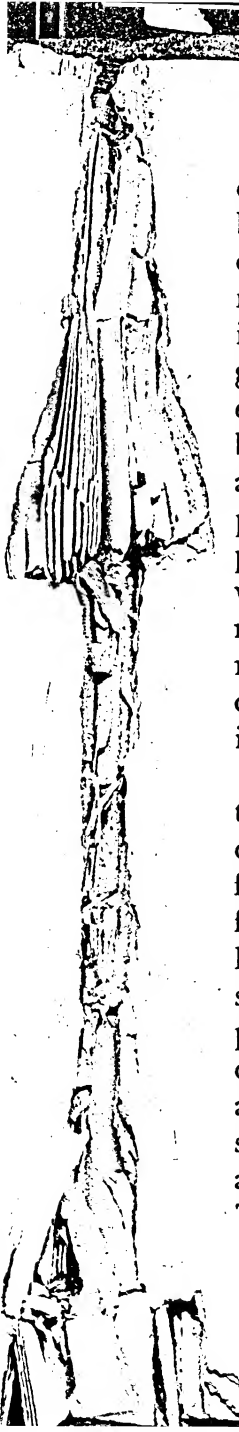
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to threaten society with collapse and anarchy. For the Christian statesman or Christian citizen there is wisdom in the warning of Abraham Lincoln: "You cannot be wise in front of the world."

In the matter of war the Church's attitude in the early centuries illustrates the problem under consideration. There is a mass of evidence from many sources, and including the greatest Fathers of the second and third centuries, that Christians in their day refused military service not only because it involved oaths of allegiance and rites which they regarded as idolatrous but because they thought the soldier's calling inconsistent with the way of love.<sup>1</sup> As power and civic responsibility came to the Church, the exclusion of its members from public life became impossible; and before the conversion of Constantine Christians in the armies were numerous. With Constantine the situation was transformed, and Christianity was encouraged to become the religion of the Empire. Consequently the Church which had hitherto never had to face the question of identifying itself with the conduct of government had to decide whether it

<sup>1</sup> Dr. C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, has collected the evidence for this, and though attempts have been made to show that his conclusions are exaggerated, the evidence is too strong to be seriously disputed.





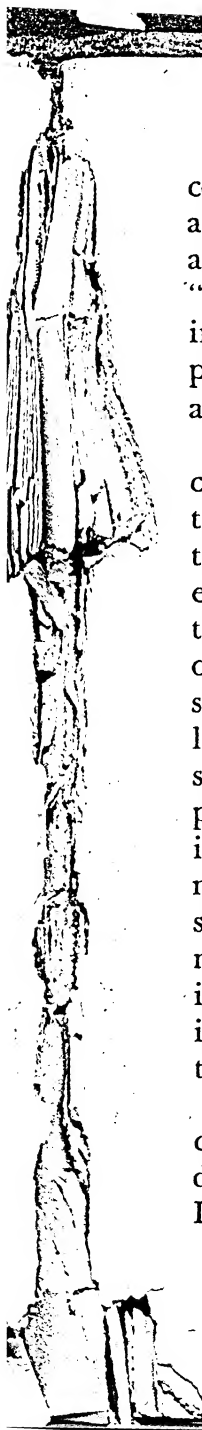
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could conscientiously do so. There will always be a difference of opinion as to whether the compromises thus involved were a right and necessary stage in the process of world evangelism or a shameful betrayal to secularism. That great good and great evil followed none can doubt; that any other course would have had better results is a matter of pure speculation: in any case the task of rewriting history is unprofitable; and to pass sentence upon the past perhaps impertinent. It is hard to see how, in view of its central doctrine and universal commission, the Church could have permanently refused to allow its members to take part in civic life, and if so how they could avoid accepting at such a period the necessity of war.

For indeed the alternatives before the Christian then or now would seem to be between a completely Tolstoyan separation of himself from all economic or political contact with his fellows, and a participation to some degree at least in corporate evil. The Church after Constantine strove to meet both possibilities by providing in the segregated and self-supporting communities of monks and nuns a way of life apart from the world; and by accepting and striving to leaven and regulate life in the world as proper for the majority of its members. There have always been in Christendom in-

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dividuals and groups seeking an uncompromising discipleship and refusing to be partakers in other men's sins. They have played a great part in maintaining the ideal of perfection, and testifying to the perils of secularization. But the influence of those who have accepted civic responsibility and been content to work for the gradual Christianizing of corporate life within the framework of the existing order has been too manifest to be denied. Incompatible as their methods appear, it seems clear that the Church has need of both; and that Christians cannot justly deny to either a place in the full membership of the blessed society. The supporters of both, if they are Christians first, will agree that Christ calls the whole man and the whole world, and calls them to perfection. Some will see their response as involving the surrender at whatever cost of all appearance of compromise: "Come ye out and be separate" expresses for them the price to be paid: it may be argued that their adventure is quixotic, unpractical, even wilful—the man who stands alone has his own temptations—it can hardly be denied that it is heroic or that it has powerful support in the words of the Gospels. Others will see their duty as necessitating a full sharing in the common life and their sacrifice as consisting in the risks and limitations and



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concessions it imposes upon them: and if it is argued that in so doing they compromise with and condone evil, and substitute a policy of "safety first" for the stark task of cross-bearing, they can at least point to the Friend of publicans and sinners as one who rejected the asceticism of His forerunner.

It ought in honesty to be added, on the principle of preferring the more difficult interpretation, that the latter reading of Scripture as sanctioning a measure of accommodation is so much easier and is so often used to enable us to make the best of both worlds that in deciding for ourselves between them we ought to weight the scales heavily against it. Comfort, power, popularity—the three temptations of Christ—are subtle inducements to accept it; and if we interpret them, as is perhaps legitimate, in a less individual fashion as the use of material welfare, military domination and ecclesiastical pretensions as short cuts in the service of God, they are not less besetting sins. The danger of cheapening the character of religion and employing instruments that distort and deny it should be too obvious to need further emphasis.

This general statement of the problem as it continually confronts Christians and the Church does not fully cover the special question of war. It may well be urged that whatever the attitude

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to war in the past this attitude is irrelevant to the changed situation. Of old war was accepted as inevitable and the public conscience was hardly awakened to its wickedness: it was an affair of professional soldiers, and the Church was not unsuccessful in alleviating its atrocities. We have to face a situation in which Christians and non-Christians alike are becoming conscious that war is intolerable, and war has changed its character and scope so that there seems little prospect of humanizing the one or restricting the other. Thus there are very many Christians who would reject the Tolstoyan alternative, and indeed lay stress on the social, economic and political activity of believers, but who claim that the time has come when in the case of war a decisive repudiation of it is essential. It is this new position which the Church has now to reckon with; and it is clear that past precedents do not supply very illuminating guidance. The question must be argued not in terms of an appeal to tradition, but by a fresh inquiry into truth, an inquiry wherein tradition is a finger-post but not a boundary fence, a finger-post invaluable in indicating the spirit in which we should proceed, misleading if taken to point out the precise path that we should follow. Modern war is a new thing in the world: new also are the



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present opportunities for peace-making: we must approach them as such.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the points from which we shall start are for the Christian the same as of old. He will seek first to interpret accurately what Christ has revealed in this regard. This cannot be settled without some inquiry into the authenticity and comparative value of the various accounts of His life and teaching; and will involve an estimate of the importance which He attached to the Old Testament, and of the significance of the various elements prophetic and apocalyptic in His utterances. This first task is mainly one of exegesis. He will then ask what light this revelation throws upon the nature of reality and will seek to construct from it a coherent scheme of thought and conduct. An incarnational philosophy is the necessary basis for a Christian ethic: our attitude towards war cannot be decided without reference to our ideas of God's nature and method of operation. This is no mere academic inquiry: it is essential to the whole quest. The second task is therefore one of generalizing from the particular to the universal, in order that our outlook may not merely include Christ's revelation as one element among many, but be genuinely Christ-

<sup>1</sup> This is the emphatic insistence in a recent Roman Catholic volume, *Peace and the Clergy*, by a German Priest.

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centred. It is a task in which we cannot hope for completeness; a task nevertheless essential if we would integrate our lives and thoughts. Finally there is the application of the convictions thus formed to the special circumstances: how is our attitude towards war to be made consistent with our concept of the Christian way of living? Here we must be thoroughly realistic, seeking to estimate accurately the character and effects of war in its modern form, the consequences of this or that decision as to participation in it, the practicability of alternative courses of action. This third task will need the co-operation of students of history and politics, of economics and sociology; for a Utopian idealism is a poor substitute for discipleship, and much that passes for realism is in fact an obstinate insistence upon ideas long since out of date. Recent discussion of questions like the future birth-rate, currency reform, the value of colonies or protection against air-raids often reveals the failure either to abandon the outworn or to relate prediction to knowledge. Christians, whatever their conclusions, are bound in loyalty to truth to see that they are based on the best available data.

The difficulties of such an inquiry are obviously so great as to daunt the solitary individual and to demand a high degree of en-

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thusiasm and of co-operation. At every stage it requires expert knowledge. The interpretation of the revelation in Christ, the formulation of a Christ-centred philosophy, the application of this philosophy to the complex and changing conditions of the time are, as every student of Christianity will recognize, the central concern of Christian scholars, thinkers and sociologists. At present, too often, these work in isolation, and not seldom with the avowed or subconscious desire to establish a preconceived result. In consequence, their findings cannot always be accepted as unbiased. The individual Christian, constrained to make up his mind as to whether he can or cannot take part in war, is thus confronted by a confusion of claims between which to decide. It is small wonder that he falls back upon some theory of immediate and arbitrary "guidance," or surrenders his conscience to someone whose personality or status attracts him. "I follow the Archbishop of York," "I believe in Dick Sheppard," are the modern equivalents of "I am of Paul and I of Apollos."

In such a case the Church has surely a very special responsibility. That this is widely recognized is proved by the constant appeals for authoritative pronouncements and by the appearance of motions on the subject on the

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agenda of the meetings of all the principal denominations. Mere debate upon the question is at the present stage futile: the issues are too serious and too difficult to be settled by impassioned rhetoric and a majority decision. Far more fruitful is the method taken by the Church of Scotland or the Baptist Union—the appointment of carefully chosen committees with instruction to discuss and report. By such reports as by the Conference at Oxford some progress has been made, at least in the matter of clarifying the points of cleavage and eliminating some few of the wilder statements on either side. But at present we have not got beyond the registering of differences, and that is a position which no Christian can regard as satisfactory or lasting. It is useless as giving help to the bewildered churchman; and it brings into contempt the Church's claim to interpret the mind of its Master.

There is then need for something more. Before opinion settles down into a contented sectarianism it ought to be possible to attempt another line of approach. So long as the inquiry is conducted by delegates appointed to champion a particular side there is no possibility either of unanimity or of creative thinking. A war of words is not more productive of good than a war of armies. Only if the matter is



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approached in a spirit of mutual trust, with such willingness to learn and impartiality of judgment as mere men can reach, only if it is approached within the fellowship of the Universal Church and in dependence upon the Spirit of God, dare we hope for guidance. If preliminary inquiries into the exegetical, doctrinal and practical aspects of the question could provide a full statement of the essential data, and if then the Church would submit these data with the utmost seriousness to a group of responsible and generous-hearted leaders, a real measure of progress might be made. Members of the Church have surely the right to ask that some such step should be taken. It is unhappily an indication of the general estimate of institutional religion that the mere suggestion of such a procedure will probably seem to most Christians almost fantastic. Yet nothing would more effectively advance both the recall to religion and the re-union of the Churches than the discovery that the Churches were facing their obligations in this respect and were initiating a united effort to meet them.

## CHAPTER VII

### WAR AS THE LESS OF TWO EVILS

PENDING action by the Church, and for those who cannot regard the State's orders as decisive, there are plainly two chief points of view to be considered. The one maintains, with whatever qualifications, that war may well be the less of two evils and therefore a legitimate activity for the Christian. The other, though its supporters differ in the absoluteness of their pacifism, agrees that in its modern form it is an instrument that the Christian must renounce. Within each group there are differences of opinion, and those nearest to the line of demarcation approximate closely to one another: but the broad distinction remains. Without attempting to trace or describe all the lesser differences, the main biblical, philosophical and practical arguments underlying the chief positions must be stated. We will take the non-pacifist first.

In interpreting the revelation in Christ it would be generally agreed that this though unique does not stand alone. It was preceded and prepared for by the revelation recorded in the Old Testament, which it fulfilled but did

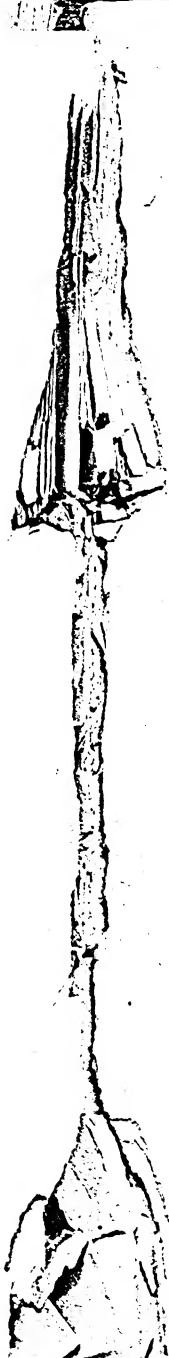
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not wholly supersede. Behind the teaching of Jesus lies the experience of God's dealings with Israel, of God's majesty and justice vindicated in the struggles and defeats of His people. It was through the discipline of war that Israel was schooled to recognize the supremacy of righteousness, the need for dependence upon God, the awful penalties of transgression. If this background is forgotten, it is fatally easy to read the Gospels sentimentally, to degrade the love of God into a non-moral benevolence and to ignore the severity and uncompromising warnings of Jesus. There is room in Christianity for recognition of the military virtues of the old dispensation: indeed Christendom would be the poorer if it set aside the heroes whose valour the Epistle to the Hebrews so splendidly acclaims.

Nor is there a word in the Gospels to suggest that Jesus abrogated His earthly ancestry. The Son of David certainly refused to identify Himself with the Zealots or to lead the national uprising for which His human status might seem to qualify Him. But He does not denounce the warriors either of the past or of His own day: instead He commends the centurion's faith, accepts war as an inevitable element in man's history, and bids His disciples prepare themselves for it. He lays down an ideal, abso-

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lute in its demands: He inspires a spirit which will ultimately make war impossible by overcoming sin, but it is not His method to legislate for particular cases: He deals with the root not the symptoms of evil. Indeed a number of His most emphatic utterances, "Fear not them that kill the body," "A man's life consists not in the multitude of his possessions," "Who made me a judge or divider over you?" if they warn us against greed and aggression, also declare that physical suffering and even physical death are by no means the worst of evils. His own example shows that He drew no sharp line between physical and psychic activity, that He regarded the body and even bodily violence as legitimate instruments for the fulfilment of God's will, and never forbade, even though He never enjoined, His followers to take part in war if by so doing they could restrain sin or vindicate righteousness. Here as elsewhere we may say in all reverence that He was a realist who recognized to the full the power of Satan and the sinfulness of men and knew that in the last resort Satan and sin could be overcome, but steadily refused to give us ground to identify discipleship with particular renunciations or to relieve us of our obligation to rely continually upon faith and divine guidance by laying down minimum conditions or imposing special rules.



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In that sense all things are lawful for us, even though plainly all things are neither expedient nor consistent with our calling. For us all the way of the Cross is the way of redemption: but in our present state it is wrong to equate that way with a doctrine of non-resistance or to deny that the man who takes part in war may in a true sense be said to "lay down his life for his friends." To kill in battle may be for us, and in the last resort, the only way to escape a betrayal of our trust. Terrible as such an alternative may be, we have no right to declare that it is absolutely closed to us.

This conclusion is reinforced from the side of Christian doctrine and philosophy. The renunciation of physical activities, the condemnation of the body and its uses as inherently inferior and degrading, the attempt to advocate a purely spiritual religion were features of the Gnostic and other heresies. The Church, true to its belief in a real Incarnation, condemned them and insisted that there was no physical act that was in itself either good or bad: the moral worth of such acts was determined by their motive: man's life is conditioned by his material environment, and his task is to bring this environment into conformity so far as he can with the will of God: to behave as if he were already a disembodied spirit is to mistake his function

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and to abrogate means essential to its discharge.

Moreover, in the evolution of mankind struggle and elimination have played a large, even dominant part. The survival of the fittest does not mean the survival of the most warlike: it does prove that conflict is a permanent condition of progress, a progress in which failure to strive is visited ruthlessly, in which the issues are those of life and death, and in which the individual is constantly sacrificed for the good of the race. In human history, as we have seen in considering the Old Testament, war has been a prominent element in the development not only of hardihood, loyalty and obedience, but of the arts and sciences, the establishment of law and order, the protection of society against anarchy and aggression. The student of the creative process may easily condemn it as too horrible to proceed from a God of love: that is to deny the first article of the Church's creed. The sentimentalist may blind himself to the aspects of nature that outrage his feelings and conceal the peril of life and the cost in blood and tears of the maintenance of its true values: that is to apply to the earth the standards of Utopia. The Christian is bound to accept his environment as within God's purpose, to learn to live dangerously, riding loose to life, and to realize that as progress in man's control over nature

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expands, so the penalties of failure to use his powers rightly are intensified. The best when corrupted becomes the worst: the ghastliness of modern war is in inverse proportion to the splendour of the results which a right use of our resources would attain. We shall not advance the achievement of those results by abjuring the use of war and so exposing ourselves and the world to those who have no such moral or religious scruples.

It is the practical aspect of the case that gives it its compelling strength. After such a struggle as that of the Great War a wave of loathing and disillusionment is natural. We can understand and sympathize with those who, having had their best years sacrificed to war, having endured horrors to which no previous campaigns show any parallel, and having seen the hopes for which they fought largely frustrated, now denounce war as the supreme iniquity, a will-o'-the-wisp that drags humanity to destruction. It is no cause for surprise that they should see in war the prime cause of their own sufferings and of the world's distress, or believe that the short cut to human welfare lies in its total renunciation. War has failed to achieve the objects for which it was fought. War and the preparation for it are overshadowing the whole life of modern man with fear, crippling every


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prospect of betterment and imperilling the very existence of civilization. War, as the story of Abyssinia, of Spain and of China proves, becomes yearly more diabolical and destructive. "Get rid of war or perish" is a natural slogan. If enough people will renounce it, governments will not dare to embark upon it: in any case those who refuse it will have done what they can to protest.

Such arguments at such a time win a measure of response; for our world is weary and overstrained, bled white of its most virile citizens, eager to nurse its wounds. Those who listen to them draw support from the jingoism of a small but loud-voiced group of Empire-builders and militarists who have most of them never seen battle except from the comfortable immunity of Parliament or Headquarters; who have profited in titles and awards by the last war and will run no special risk in the next; whose prating of glory and patriotism like that of Kipling's "jelly-bellied flag-flapper" makes any decently sensitive person squirm; whose blatant heathenism is almost enough to convert any Christian to pacifism. The case for the Christian's participation in war would be vastly strengthened if this section of its advocates would take vows of silence.

For when all allowance is made for the





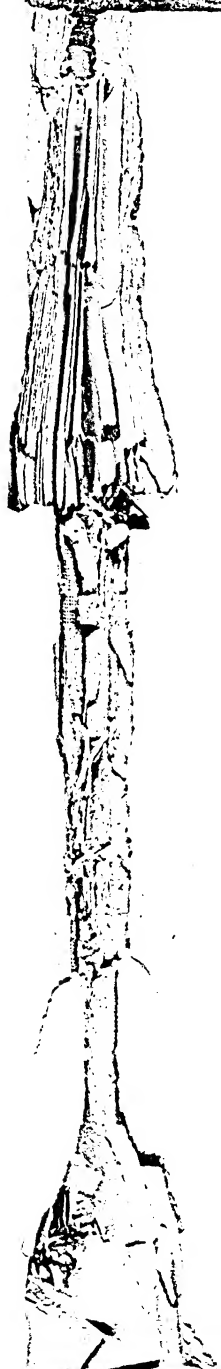
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present drift towards pacifism, recent events should warn us that the contentions drawn from Scripture and doctrine cannot be lightly dismissed. It is at least probable that if it had not been for the wave of anti-militarism which made it impossible for our statesmen to rely upon public support in any adequate maintenance of British armaments, the obligations of the members of the League in the matter of Abyssinia would have been honoured; the principle of collective security, which for all the smaller nations is fundamental, would not have been brought into disrepute; the tragic destruction of the last native African autonomy would have been averted. So, too, in Spain, if the democratic peoples can only be neutral while the totalitarian states can count upon the fighting quality of their peoples, is there any hope for human freedom or popular government? So long as there are nations which glorify war and look to it as the ultimate arbiter in human affairs, those of us who detest it have either to maintain peace by force of arms or allow them to fulfil their ambitions unrestrained.

Nor are such arguments to be drawn only from the international field. We have responsibilities of our own which would be betrayed if pacifism was universally accepted. Nothing is more evident than that if our battalions were

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withdrawn from Palestine wholesale rioting and massacre would result. The thousands of Jews who have sought a home there, relying on our power to safeguard their lives, would be exposed to the assaults of people who still believe war to be a holy calling and the slaughter of infidels the proper work of a true believer. On the north-west frontier, in Africa, in every outpost of Empire, the civilizing activities of missionaries, doctors and teachers are carried on under the protection and prestige of the armed forces of the Crown. Like police in civil life, the army, fleet and air force convince the disturber of the peace that violence does not pay. He is often impervious to other arguments, and a wholesome fear of consequences is an indispensable deterrent. It is our business as Christians to work and pray for a time when wars shall cease, to give our best in support of every activity which will replace reliance upon armed force by other and less horrible sanctions. But the time for total repudiation of war is not yet, and the attitude which rejects all use of armed force logically involves a rejection of all physical compulsion and the acceptance of a Tolstoyan anarchism by which civilization would be destroyed. Meanwhile it is abundantly evident that the world as a whole is not ready for disarmament; that to advocate it only weakens our



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influence; and that, with every wish that it were otherwise, pacifism at present defeats the very cause that it desires to serve.

Let those who doubt this consider the evidence of Germany in the post-war period. It is not easy to deny that there was a period when the bitterness of defeat and the resentment against the Treaty of Versailles gave way to a genuine desire for peace and neighbourliness, for democracy at home and international co-operation abroad. A statesman like Stresemann should, if pacifist arguments are sound, have won a generous recognition from the rest of Europe, and been able to count upon the support of all Christian opinion. It is plain fact, deeply as many of us may regret it, that his policy of non-resistance met with no response. When a gesture was due, it was refused; when he had demonstrated his honest and peaceful intentions, the other nations concerned made no sort of effort to acknowledge or encourage his efforts. We were content to let Germany suffer with her economic situation desperate, her territory occupied, her grievances disregarded. Yet when his peaceful programme failed and Germany gave ear to the Nazi insistence upon national self-reliance and military revival Europe's attitude changed. The appeal of the pacifist had gone unheeded: the threats

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of a re-armed and resolute Reich obtained all and more than all that gentler methods had sought in vain. It is proof, tragic proof, that pacifism is as yet hopelessly impracticable—indeed that its sole effect is to produce a reaction into ruthlessness and the glorification of might.

It is not that war is anything but evil, or that those who cannot renounce it altogether are indifferent to the devilish character of its modern developments. They long, not less earnestly than the pacifist, for the day when man will be set free from reliance upon force as the ultimate sanction of governments, and from fear and greed and hate as dominant motives for action. Not less do they deplore the false patriotism of "my country right or wrong," the exaggerated nationalism which acknowledges no end higher than its own aggrandizement. But they are compelled to realize that mankind has not yet learnt its lesson; that terrible as have been the effects of the last war, far more suicidal as will be the next, we are too unimaginative, too egoistic, too unregenerate to abstain from mutual destruction. The world is not yet ready for peace; and if those who desire to work for peace disarm prematurely, they will merely sacrifice all hope of attaining it. For peace must be



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founded upon justice, and to refuse to resist aggression is to deprive justice both of sword and scales.

And if mankind in general is not yet ready for peace, it would be doubly disastrous for the great democracies to relax their strength. It is upon their support that the League of Nations rests. Their weakness and unwillingness to run the risk of war have already damaged its reputation and allowed open violations of its Covenant to go unpunished. It would forfeit the allegiance of the smaller nations if the power of Britain were further curtailed: it might well collapse but for the conviction that we are genuinely committed to it and able in the last resort to make good our promises. No doubt from the purely selfish point of view such commitment is a source of peril: no doubt to many Britons the value of the League seems questionable. But we are considering the matter as Christians to whom has been entrusted a responsibility not for ourselves only but for the world: and it is a simple fact that the idea of collective security guaranteed by the armaments of France and Britain is to many European countries the one ground of hope. Certainly they are almost unanimous in declaring that the promise of united action against a proved aggressor, disappointing as it has hitherto been, alone stands

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between them and something not far from despair. If the League goes, if this country refuses to take its share in military establishments, then the smaller nations will feel that a gulf has opened under their feet. The League, for us all, represents a bridge to what we believe will be a new international order; for them it is the only life-line in a world of storm. However despondent we may be over its lack of success, it is largely our own willingness to disarm that is to blame. We shall have betrayed the one good result of the years of war if we let it sink further into impotence.

The old adage "if you want peace, prepare for war" has been seriously criticized by those who maintain that it was the piling up of armaments that was the chief cause of the outbreak of 1914. Taken by itself it is clearly a sub-Christian precept. Constructive peace-making, the building up of international law, of a central and super-national authority, the removal of grievances, economic and financial reconstruction, cultural advance and similar activities must be the main concern of the Christian statesman: but to safeguard such tasks there is surely a use of force which may be truly hallowed. As such force becomes not merely in intention but in fact internationalized, it will assume the exact functions of the police, as an instrument for the



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protection of the world against its criminal elements, a bulwark of justice, a guarantee of peace. If even in a settled and law-abiding community the police still play an indispensable part, it is mere fantasy to suppose that in a world largely uncivilized, rankling with bitterness, ridden with fears, law and order can be imposed without any such supporters. To live in a fool's paradise is neither common sense nor Christianity.

War is evil, and as such the Christian is bound to labour for its disappearance. But it is not the only evil, nor necessarily so much more sinful than other elements in our social life as to call for special treatment. To betray the pledged word, to involve unwilling victims in disaster, to shirk responsibilities laid upon us by our position in the world of nations. these are also evils. There is rarely a clear-cut choice between a right and a wrong line of action. The Christian must weigh each case on its merits, doing his best to gain a true knowledge of the relevant facts, to strip himself of prejudices and self-will, to resist the pressure of mass-suggestion, and to seek for God's guidance in reaching a decision. To resolve beforehand and without reference to special circumstances that a particular course is impossible is to live not by a living faith but by rule and rote.

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There is the further point that even if the Christian disapproves of the actions of his fellow-countrymen that have built up the Empire, or given us our place in India, or planted the Jews in Palestine, yet these are facts which cannot be ignored. The consequences of them have to be faced: the majority of our countrymen are certainly not prepared to leave the Empire undefended, to open the north-west frontier, or to expose the Jews to massacre. Is it Christian for the pacifist to flout the convictions of his fellows, to refuse to carry his share of the burden, and to leave to others the hazards involved, doing his best to weaken them and yet claiming all the privileges which their efforts secure for him? If he wishes to be consistent he ought to recognize that his status as a British citizen, his standard of living, his immunity from fear and oppression are dependent upon the military establishment which he condemns; that the acceptance of these benefits lays upon him a moral obligation to contribute towards the armed strength which maintains them; that he cannot honestly take the advantages and refuse the conditions under which they are obtained; and that if he renounces all contact with war he ought also to renounce his franchise and nationality. He cannot properly have it both ways.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RENUNCIATION OF WAR

WE have tried to set out the arguments of those who would defend the right of Christians to take part in war as strongly and clearly as possible: for there is a real danger that their cogency may be ignored and the position be condemned by default. Its professed supporters have lately been for the most part either silent or apologetic. They are no doubt embarrassed by the futilities of the little group of politicians who have taken upon themselves to expound the Christian religion and denounce pacifism; by a dislike of the chauvinism which their arguments might be supposed to endorse; and by a chivalrous wish to deal gently with a mistaken but conscientious and unpopular minority. Whatever the reasons, their statements have been few, and to a candid critic unconvincing. The Bishop of Gloucester's unargued assumption that it is the natural duty of every citizen to fight for his country;<sup>1</sup> the Bishop of Durham's skill in concealing super-

<sup>1</sup> *What it Means to be a Christian.*

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ficiality of thought by felicity of speech;<sup>1</sup> the Archbishop of York's unfortunate attempt to settle the issue by attaching to pacifists the labels of three irrelevant heresies;<sup>2</sup> these and similar utterances contrast unfavourably with the logic, insight, sincerity and literary power of the pacifist spokesmen. Lord Ponsonby, Lord Russell, Mr. Aldous Huxley, Mr. Gerald Heard, Mr. Middleton Murry and the Bishop of Birmingham are men whose intellectual power is probably greater than that of any other group in the public life of Britain. Where they, each from his special angle, have vindicated pacifism, they deserve a fuller answer than the casual comment of ecclesiastics and statesmen.

Indeed, in view of the mass of literature, it might seem unnecessary to set out once more the case of those Christians who are convinced that modern war is wholly irreconcilable with their faith.<sup>3</sup> The prejudice and misunderstandings still prevalent and the boycott which denies to pacifists the opportunity to present their views in many influential and most popular newspapers make it fairer to take nothing for granted.

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Morality: Natural, Developing, Final.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 29 October 1935.

<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps permissible for me to refer to my fuller treatment of the subject in *The Universal Church and the World of Nations*, pp. 287-315.



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If we appeal to Scripture, in spite of the primitive and occasionally savage elements that enter into the Old Testament, the emphasis is always upon peace. War is a punishment for apostasy, a judgment upon the sinful nation, a necessity in the present but an evil to be banished in the future. David, the man of war, may not for that reason build the house of the Lord: Solomon is an object of wistful remembrance on account of the peace (and it must be admitted the prosperity) of his reign. The succession of the prophets almost without exception strives to turn the people from reliance upon force and statecraft. Jeremiah, the greatest of them, denounces the ambitions of the king and advocates non-resistance with a moral courage that compels the admiration of those whom he castigates. Always it is by a faithful remnant, the remnant that has endured suffering unto death, that salvation has been won. It is to them that love mercy and live peaceably that the promises are given.

Jesus, while He accepted the Old Testament, is in the succession not of its warriors but of its prophets. From the Temptation onwards His rejection of war is unquestionable. To gain the glory of the kingdoms of the world is to pay homage to Satan. The Beatitudes proclaim the worth of the poor, the meek, the

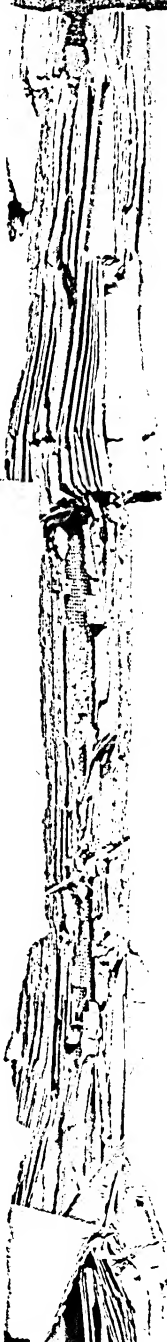
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single-minded, the suffering, the persecuted. The Sermon on the Mount declares the duty of non-resistance and replaces the *lex talionis* by the golden rule, abrogating rather than fulfilling here as elsewhere the old dispensation. The course of His ministry seems clearly to have been determined by the refusal to risk an outbreak of nationalist violence among the excitable Galileans: He will not announce His own status among them, and when they desire to make Him king rejects their offer uncompromisingly.<sup>1</sup> When His disciples have recognized His Messiahship, He sets Himself to strip the title of its traditional association with military glory: He is the suffering servant of God, meek and lowly, going not to a throne but to a cross.

The essential weakness of non-pacifist exegesis lies not only in its failure to interpret the teaching and ministry, but at the point where failure is least excusable, the central point of the Crucifixion. They treat it<sup>2</sup> as inevitably the correct course for Jesus, but, in spite of His insistence that cross-bearing is the condition of discipleship, as by no means universal in its meaning or binding upon others. Yet the Cross in the New Testament and in the deepest Christian

<sup>1</sup> The Fourth Gospel is not less definite in this respect than the Synoptists.

<sup>2</sup> For justification of this cf. *The Church's Attitude to Peace and War*, pp. 14-15.



## *The Renunciation of War*

experience is the supreme redemptive event, the central revelation of God's method of dealing with evil, the symbol and instrument of Christianity. It embodies what the ministry had foreshadowed, the unique value of the love that gives to the uttermost. It is Christ's witness to the weakness and folly of the sword, to the triumphant power of non-resistance, to the new way of overcoming evil with good. This is the heart of the Christian mystery, and its meaning is scarcely disputable. Jesus is acknowledged as the Saviour precisely because He challenged and overthrew man's reliance upon military power, man's arrogance in claiming for himself the right to torture and slay. St. Paul and the New Testament generally recognize the novelty, the universality and the revolutionary character of their good news. It may be a scandal to Jews and foolishness to Greeks: it is none the less the unveiling of the power and the wisdom of God.


Of course it is revolutionary. It demands a genuine *metanoia*, a change of mind and outlook, a rejection of the instinctive egoisms and aggressiveness of man, of his standards of glory and greatness, a transvaluation of values more radical than most of those who use the phrase acknowledge. If anyone would question this, let him reflect upon the fruit of the Spirit,

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"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22-3): let him compare it with the opposite catalogue of "works of the flesh," "idolatry, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, murders and such like" (l.c. verses 20-1): and let him realize how utterly incompatible are the Christian virtues with the fact of war or the qualities acclaimed by soldiers and statesmen. That catalogue comes not from a coward or a weakling, but from Paul the Dauntless, one of the supreme creative geniuses in history, whose influence far outweighs that of all the captains and kings of the world.

Of course Jesus may have been mistaken. It may be that His teaching and example if followed would have resulted in anarchy, in the social, economic and political ruin of society. So Dr. Klausner has argued, claiming (on somewhat slender evidence) that the Jewish leaders recognized this and condemned one whose activities were plainly subversive—claiming too (and here he is on firmer ground) that it is more honest to reject the Nazarene than to do what the Church has done, profess to deify and then studiously refuse to follow.<sup>1</sup> He may have been wrong, a deluded dreamer and unpractical idealist. But, if He is wrong here in

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth.*



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the very crux of His message, then it is ridiculous to call Him "the Way and the Truth and the Life," and dishonest to preach the Cross as the means of salvation. We cannot have it both ways.

This is the strength of the pacifist case that in this matter it gives full value to the revelation in Christ and stands for an uncompromising discipleship. By contrast, as anyone can easily perceive if he reads their arguments carefully, the opponents of pacifism constantly waver in their allegiance between the Spirit and the works of the flesh. They profess to advocate love and the way of the Cross, but regularly measure individual and political achievement by its success, its material grandeur, its military power, its ecclesiastical prestige: that is they proclaim as excellent the very things which Jesus in His temptation condemned as devilish. If the Cross is the victory, then the triumph of Fascism or of the allies looks like defeat—defeat attested by its results in arrogance, insecurity, fear and the idolizing of false gods. But of this anon.

This must not be taken to mean that physical activity is on a necessarily lower plane than spiritual, or that the pacifist repudiates all use of force. He will not agree that the example of Jesus proves that all physical restraints are evil,

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or that the logical outcome of the rejection of war is anarchy.<sup>1</sup> He accepts the necessity of a step-by-step process in the working-out of God's purpose, insisting that in the matter of war the time for advance has come. He is no Manichee, and in accepting the Incarnation accepts the belief that the body is and must be the instrument in and by which he is to fulfil his discipleship. It is his prayer, as it was that of St. Paul, that "body, soul and spirit may be preserved entire," and that the law of love may control all their doings. Violent action is not thereby necessarily sinful, provided it is used in fulfilment of love's purpose and by means consistent with that end. But the example of Jesus, who refused to coerce or outrage the personalities of others, warns him that used otherwise it is both wrong and in the long run ineffective. By no conceivable argument can modern war be regarded as a hallowed use of force.

In the early history of the Church, Christians in the main accepted and strove to fulfil the implications of their faith, and the Church grew and commended its way to the world. There are few parallels in literature to those first letters and records, confessions and inscriptions of the faithful—to the Letter to Diognetus or the Letter of the Churches of Vienne, to the story

<sup>1</sup> I have discussed this point more fully in *Is War Obsolete?*



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of Perpetua and Felicitas, to the inscriptions in the Catacombs. Later ages, preserving only what was of use for doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversy, have let most of these nobler relics be lost. Enough remains to explain the creative vitality of the first Christians and the unwilling testimonies and worldly sneers of their opponents. Here was a new kind of fellowship, a new Spirit abroad among men; and love, love of God and of the brethren, was its characteristic.

No candid student can be blind to the degradation of Christianity that accompanied its rise to secular power. No doubt the legalism of its Jewish heritage, the dualism and puritanism of Orientals, and the exaggerated intellectualism of the Greeks gravely distorted its full meaning. But it was the Roman genius for empire, for constitutions and statutes and a hierarchy of officers, that was really disastrous. If God is the Father, His children are a family, and family-life cannot be organized after the model of a totalitarian state. When the Church strove to win the kingdoms of the world by becoming itself a kingdom after their pattern, it ought to have torn up the Beatitudes and replaced the cross by a throne,<sup>1</sup> even as it substituted the triple tiara for the crown of thorns.

<sup>1</sup> Those who set St. Peter's chair above the east end of his basilica in Rome builded more truly than they knew.

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To provide in the monasteries a way of escape for those whose souls revolted against the triumph of worldliness, was only to secure that the worldlings' enjoyment of pomp and prestige should be undisturbed by protests. It is one thing to admit, as the critics of pacifism would urge, that discipleship must not be made conditional upon particular renunciations: it is another to behave as if this were a pretext for denying any necessary difference between the disciple and the apostate. The way of the Cross is not an unimportant sequel to faith which the believer may accept or refuse: it is the faith's core and condition. To regard it as a voluntary obligation, as those do who argue that war is not necessarily inconsistent with the New Testament, is to pervert the essence of our religion.

If the significance of the Cross is understood, it is plainly impossible to set it aside on the strength of two or three utterances which may be forced into some sort of authorization of war. As we have seen, the vast majority of the words of Jesus, and the whole sequence and character of His ministry, bear direct witness to the obligation to overcome evil with good, to the iniquity of doing evil that good may come. The few sentences that are regularly paraded by the non-pacifist, as the New Testament authorities for his opinion, have been

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clearly expounded by Dr. G. H. C. Macgregor,<sup>1</sup> and his interpretations need not be repeated here. It is, in fact, more than doubtful whether any single utterance or action of Jesus gives any sort of sanction to war in any form: it is absurd to suppose that they justify the mass-murders of modern conflict.

When we turn to the wider field of doctrine and philosophy the position is not less clear, although much of Christian theology and ethics was formulated after the age of Constantine when war had been officially permitted.

God in the light of Christ is the Father, "whose nature and whose name is love." Care must be taken to recognize the austerity, the justice, the truth which are secondary to but inseparable from love, and save it from degenerating into amiability. But if we are to achieve justice, we must aim first at establishing love.<sup>2</sup> There is no Christian justification for regarding, as some non-pacifists appear to do, justice and love as existing side by side and as alternate modes of activity in the divine nature. This is, of course, to repeat the heresy of Marcion, which set the just God of the Old Testament in opposition to the loving God of the New.

<sup>1</sup> *The New Testament Basis of Pacifism.*

<sup>2</sup> The function of justice is to maintain and foster the righteousness of the relationships created by love. If divorced from love, it becomes a soulless legalism.

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When the Archbishop of York makes this error and then argues that "the law of love is not applicable to nations consisting in large measure of unconverted citizens,"<sup>1</sup> he outdoes Marcion; for, having separated justice and love, Marcion rejected the Old Testament while the Archbishop rejects the New. For manifestly if there are any conditions to which love does not apply, then either God is not God, or God is not love: if love does not apply to our dealings with non-Christians, then St. Paul's struggle in Galatia and triumph in Corinth, and indeed the whole adventure of Christian missionaries are based upon a mistake.

To reconcile this belief with the evidence supplied by the character of the creative process and of human history is, as Dr. Gore wisely declared, the most difficult of all the theologian's tasks. But it is the concern of the non-pacifist as much as the pacifist. Where the latter differs from the former, is in emphasizing more strongly the survival value of the pacific qualities, sensitiveness, sociability and co-operation, the superiority of the social to the individual instincts, the doom that awaits the immune and the predatory. Moreover, in the matter of struggle, though he will not deny its sifting influence or place in the scheme of

<sup>1</sup> *York Diocesan Leaflet* and *The Times*, 29 October 1935.

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things, he will contend that even in the animal creation there is plain evidence that as life advances conflict tends to pass from the physical to the psychic plane.<sup>1</sup> Battle within the species is in fact a rare thing in nature, and at the higher levels of life is largely replaced by display and by the curious claim and acknowledgment of psychic superiority. Struggle is admittedly a permanent condition of life on earth: but there is evidence that in the course of evolution the struggle changes its character, that with man it becomes more and more a spiritual adventure, and that for the Christian St. Paul's words, "we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers," ought to be taken seriously.

This is indeed the claim that the pacifist would make from his reading of history: that Jesus came to reveal and initiate a new way of life in which sheer reliance upon the power of the Spirit of God should replace man's hankering after material successes and physical satisfactions; that the sons of the heavenly Father are reborn into a world in which the flesh is the symbol and instrument of the spirit; and that only as man accepts this rebirth and gains release thereby from his divided loyalties will he achieve singleness of mind ("integration")

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hingston, *Animal Colour and Adornment*.

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and discover that "all things work together for good." The magnitude of such a transformation can only be described adequately in the language of Apocalyptic: it is the advent of a new heaven and a new earth. This the earliest disciples expected as an immediate possibility, indeed, as already to some extent accomplished. No doubt their expectation was expressed in a symbolism which, if taken literally, was misleading: no doubt they often exaggerated the metaphors and interpreted the event in terms of physical prodigies rather than of spiritual realities. But it is plain that the reducing of Apocalyptic to a crude and materialistic Millenarianism and its consequent disappearance were accompanied by a real compromising of the gospel and a manifest loss of spiritual vitality. When Montanism, the last and least satisfactory of the attempts to affirm that the age of the Spirit had already come, was suppressed in the interests of ecclesiastical order, the Church settled down to an acceptance of the conviction that nothing could be expected to happen suddenly, that it was best to use the wisdom and ways of this world and try gradually to modify them, and that the coming of the Kingdom of God was either identical with the growth of the institutional and secularized Church or could only take place by some fresh miraculous

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intervention and outside human history. It is the pacifist's contention that of these last mentioned alternatives the former is equivalent to making the best of both worlds and trying to combine the service of God and Mammon, and that the latter denies the sufficiency of the salvation brought by Jesus, and therefore in effect the fullness of the revelation in Him.

Whether or no this verdict is accepted, it is at least plain that even if we refuse to condemn the past and agree that progress must be slow and gradual, yet there are from time to time issues upon which the Church must take a decision and can only refuse to go forward at the cost of a betrayal of her trust. In history there have been occasions in which the Christian conscience has become sensitive to the sinfulness of activities which it had previously tolerated or even encouraged. To continue to practise what the conscience has rejected is to incur the guilt of deliberate rebellion. In an imperfect world and as members one of another, we cannot escape all contact with evil. So long as this evil is unrecognized, the excuse of ignorance ("they know not what they do") may be pleaded on our behalf. When a particular manifestation of evil is seen in its true character, then for the Christian to acquiesce in it is sin, and the sinner not only forfeits an oppor-

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tunity of growth but finds his second state worse than his first. Now that war outrages the conscience of mankind, the Church can no longer assent to it. To do so is to incur the punishment of "many stripes," the just condemnation passed upon those who do evil that good may come. No considerations of prudence or worldly wisdom can justify such a course.

"This is not to incur the charge of dealing only with symptoms. It may be that an immediate and complete overthrow of evil is impossible: certainly the evidence of evolution and history points to a step-by-step process—else surely God would have created the world perfect from the beginning. If His purpose is "the manifestation of the sons of God," then freedom of choice and the consequent record of delays, errors, struggles and slow but by no means automatic progress, are essential to that purpose. The quest for perfection will present itself as a series of stages to be travelled, of concrete and limited objectives to be attained. In the individual and in the race, attainment consists in maintaining loyalty to an absolute demand and striving to fulfil that obligation in the particular circumstances of each day. No thinking Christian supposes that to overcome a special manifestation of evil is to attain perfection: he does not on that account refuse to deal with any special



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sin; indeed he knows that only as he wrestles with the immediate obstacle will he make any progress at all. At the present stage of development war is the aspect of evil that challenges us; it offers, if renounced, opportunity for man's next great advance, and threatens, if that opportunity is not taken, an overwhelming set-back to the whole human development.

For those who believe, or profess to believe, that man is a fighting animal, that you cannot change human nature, and that human history is the history of wars, our hope will appear an illusion: but such belief denies both the faith and the experience of Christendom. The non-pacifist while, of course, rejecting such errors, yet seems constantly to admit that God is dependent upon the big battalions, that military force is the ultimate basis of government, and that security, power and prestige are proofs of the divine favour: and these are hardly less a denial of Christianity. Churches whose self-preservation and aggrandizement seem often their chief concern; ecclesiastics whose success is estimated by titles and who have a strong vested interest in the popularity of their denomination; codes of ethics which concentrate upon individual and ignore social sins, and insist upon the literal fulfilment of Christ's words about divorce while ignoring His equally defin-

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ite words about "turning the other cheek"; these naturally make "safety first" their slogan, avoid anything which would embarrass the powers that be, and shrink from advocating unpopular causes. That is one main cause for the present and not unjustifiable dislike of institutional religion. It is also the reason why so many Christians regard its decision about war as the acid test of the Church's sincerity and fitness to survive.

In contrast with this the pacifist is convinced that the faith of Jesus is universally valid, that the Cross is the instrument of salvation, that by it alone is the *koinonia*, the communion and community of the Holy Spirit realizable, that man is made for such community, that he can only attain it by using means consistent with his end, that war is a denial of those means, a frustration of that end, that here and now spiritual resources are available, that they are in the long run the most potent factors in history, and that the urgency of the issue challenges every Christian to take the risk of an uncompromising rejection of war. Acting on those convictions he may fail, or seem to fail. Nevertheless, both for himself and for the world, both as an individual and as a citizen, it is better for him to obey God rather than man. Indeed the alternative is so plain that he can do no other.

## CHAPTER IX

### PACIFISM AND PRACTICAL AFFAIRS

TURNING from general considerations to the evidence of present happenings, the pacifist finds much support for his convictions.

In the first place war, as we have already urged, has completely changed its character.

It is almost tiresome to remark [writes Dr. Brunner<sup>1</sup>] that the same word is used to describe the local incidents which used to be called wars and the world-wide conflagrations which constitute the only kind of war to-day. . . . The idea of winning a war still plays its old disastrous part in the popular mind, but it no longer has any place in reality. In modern warfare all are conquered and none are victors; in modern warfare there is no longer any non-combatant population. . . . Some decades ago war may have been an instrument which, although it was brutal, could be used to resolve intolerable international tension: but to-day, owing to the fact that it cannot be controlled, it has lost even this shred of utility. . . . War has outlived itself. To expect to establish any just order by means of a world conflagration has become a political madness. . . . Even the Machiavelli of the future will not think in military terms, because he will not be so foolish as to cause his own nation to commit suicide.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 470-1. This whole section of Dr. Brunner's book is impressive, the more so because he is by no means an absolute pacifist.

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That another world war would mean the downfall of our civilization is a conclusion which appears hardly exaggerated. We are still suffering from the disasters of the Great War—disasters the full count of which is beyond reckoning; and the frightfulness of more recent conflicts proves that the destructiveness of the new instruments of death is vastly greater than those of 1914-18.

It is necessary to dispose of two arguments that are sometimes adduced to meet this claim—arguments which to some extent cancel out. The first is the assertion, made by indignant patriots, that although, of course, Fascist Italy or Imperial Japan does not hesitate to terrorize civil populations with mustard rain and incendiary bombs, no such use of the Air Force is contemplated by this country. *Sancta simplicitas* or its modern and profane equivalent is the sufficient reply. Lord Baldwin, a sincere and by no means militaristic statesman, has warned us that in aerial warfare the morale of the civilian is the main objective, and that in it the only defence is attack, the only restraint *rétaliation*. As long as war is approved, no nation will allow itself to be defeated by refusing to use methods adopted by its enemy. Moreover, wherever the personal responsibility lies, it is unquestionable that this country was very largely to blame for

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the rejection of the proposals to outlaw bombing from the air:<sup>1</sup> we continue to build, and in spite of vigorous protests from India continue to employ bombing planes for the destruction of the villages, the elderly and the infants, of the tribes of the north-west frontier. The second argument builds not upon the possibility of humanizing war, but upon the hope that by accentuating its frightfulness we may make responsible authorities unwilling to resort to it. This not only traverses the easily proven fact that the piling up of armaments fosters the readiness to employ them, but suggests that fear is a compelling motive for preventing strife, which is psychologically false and morally deplorable. The only logical outcome of such an argument is that each side will hasten to get in the first blow, to shatter the spirit of its foe within a few hours of, or even before, the declaration of war.

The fact of war has always been a challenge to the Christian. To-day that challenge raises the religious issue more plainly than ever: for whatever excuses Thomas Aquinas or Luther might find for the local and professional conflicts of their days are wholly irrelevant to the mass-murder, the bestiality and terrorism of war

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Minutes of plenary session Air Disarmament Conference, 1933, and Lord Londonderry's speech, May 22, 1935.

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as it is to-day. That challenge is underlined, because if war involves the ruin of victor and vanquished alike, then it is in reality a suicide-pact which can serve no good end whatsoever—except for those who regard the destruction of so foolish and corrupt a civilization as preferable to its survival. This being the character and effects of war, it is manifestly the duty of every good citizen to renounce it for himself and to strive to persuade his fellow-countrymen to do the same.

In the second place the whole character and potentialities of civilization have changed almost as radically as has warfare. The sentiment of *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* reflects the outlook of the age of a strictly localized population, when all that the vast majority of men knew of the world was their own village and neighbouring town, when the State was the largest conceivable unit, and when any sort of world-loyalty was a dream for a remote future. Then, probably, the self-perpetuation and autonomy of one's own government was a legitimate end—though early Christian thought would always have made this strictly subordinate to loyalty towards God and the general welfare of all men. A local patriotism was natural so long as the speed of transport was limited by the pace of horses and sailing-ships

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—the time-span between towns and countries was as large at Waterloo as it had been in the Iliad. The steam-engine, the steamship, the bicycle, the motor-car, the aeroplane have made the world one neighbourhood; telegraph, telephone, wireless have made us next-door neighbours. In consequence we are already living in a unified world, an international order. War has become civil war. All the jargon about States as ends in themselves, the autonomous sovereignty of the State as a natural law, the primary duty of the citizen to defend his fatherland has always been to the Christian something of a blasphemy; it is now for us all an anachronism. To carry over into the new age the petty enthusiasms for flags and colonies and the idolizing of one land as against all others is to ignore the facts and frustrate the possibilities of the situation. The isolationism of the Little Englander and the jingoism of the Imperialist are equally out of date. In many spheres of life, education, science, the arts, music, literature, we are already internationalists: even in religion there is a real measure of co-operation, and among Christians a vital ecumenical movement. The politicians and the militarists alone refuse to move with anything like the speed and creative energy that the times demand.

In this respect a special responsibility rests

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upon Britain. As "the greatest Empire in history," our refusal to recognize the new situation is mainly to blame for the aggressive nationalism of other less widespread States. It is for us to take the lead—that has been obvious ever since 1918, and we have not taken it. Instead we have denounced with righteous indignation the Italian bid for empire—though in fact the conquest of Abyssinia is not harder to justify than our own South African War: in the one case it might be claimed to be a civilizing mission, in the other gold and diamonds were the only legitimate excuse. We have sneered at the German demand for colonies, and taken no steps to give effect to the occasional vague promises of our representatives at Geneva. We have assumed that we were peculiarly qualified to carry the white man's burden—though in fact race-prejudice, that fatal bar to any power over coloured people, is more general among us than among the French. We have asserted that it was God's will that we should possess the earth, and even invented a mythology, the legends of British-Israel, to give us Scriptural warrant. We have paraded the altruism and benefits of our rule in India, and been very careful to boycott and refuse the import of American or Indian protests. We hold mass-meetings to



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express our loathing of Japan's bombing of Nanking and Canton, though we ourselves set them the example against Kurds<sup>1</sup> and Pathans.<sup>2</sup> Our press applauds any member of the Cabinet who eulogizes the past and future of our imperialism, or bids our people rely upon their own strength, or castigates pacifists and internationalists—though those same papers jeer and jibber when Mussolini or Hitler use exactly the same language. No wonder the rest of the world still calls us "the Island Pharisees," and cannot believe that our politicians are not sinister and subtle Machiavellis.

Hardly less easy to excuse of "hypocrisy" is the attitude commonly taken by our countrymen to the League of Nations. The Christian, pacifist or no, will recognize the worth of the League in idea, and cling to it as a seed from which a real international order may some day develop: as such it would be lamentable if its political activities ceased. But despite the fervour of its advocates it is at present more like the Holy Alliance than the "federation of the world." In it, now as always, the "haves" are in power: Britain and France control policy: and their leadership has too often been coloured

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mumford, *Humanity, Air Power and War*, pp. 71-5.

<sup>2</sup> Andrews, *The Challenge of the North-West Frontier*, pp. 91-102.

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by the evident desire to secure their own supremacy. So long as collective security means that these two countries, having won the greatest part of the world, can now stabilize their gains, and invoke the Covenant against any who threaten to challenge their rights, respect for the League as an instrument for international co-operation and impartial justice can hardly be whole-hearted. No wonder that it has proved impossible to rely upon collective security under such circumstances. There has been almost no tangible attempt to treat even the mandated territories as genuinely under international control: still less any effort to make such control a reality or to extend its operation. It is easy for us to blame French chauvinism for our rather shameful failure to implement the disarmament pledges of the Versailles treaty. It is irreconcilable with the claims that we make for British prestige and British disinterestedness that we should not have taken the initiative in endowing the League with a real sphere of direct authority or in meeting the acknowledged grievances of the victims of Versailles.

For the Christian it is surely manifest that in order to speak sincerely of the Covenant we ought to begin with an act of penitence. There are, as we should all heartily and thankfully

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recognize, splendid pages in the history of our expansion and dealings with native peoples. But so long as we regard it as disloyal to suggest that many other pages even in modern times do not bear an impartial examination, we are in fact endorsing the blasphemy of "my country, right or wrong," and are refusing to accept the basic principles of the new age. As a practical step many pacifists would insist that so long as the claims of its members to absolute autonomy are unaltered the League cannot hope to become a truly international authority or to promote the original purpose of its founders, the federalizing of States; that Britain is alone in a position to endow the League with real power; that to place not only the mandated territories but the Crown Colonies under the direct government of the League would transform it at once from shadow to substance; and that to stigmatize such a proposal as parcelling out the Empire is to be guilty of a deliberate misuse of language.

In the third place it is argued that so long as the avowed reliance on force is maintained there is no prospect of constructive peace-making. "War is a curse which cannot be exorcized by the threat of future war, under any name whatever."<sup>1</sup> It is useless to profess

<sup>1</sup> Delisle Burns, *War*, p. 118.

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pacific intentions and to continue to educate our sons in Officers' Training Corps; to praise internationalism at Geneva and insist upon British autonomy at home, to win an election on a speech promising international co-operation and a world conference on economic readjustment and then to use the victory to embark upon a vast programme of rearmament. It is foolish to expect any will to peace so long as we approach the subject with a Bible in one hand and a bomb in the other. No private individual would negotiate in that way if he had any desire for friendliness. "We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do" is neither a conciliatory nor a Christian attitude. So long as it is maintained, there can be little hope of a release from fear or from the inevitable conflict that fear provokes. It taints every offer however well-intentioned with an odour of insincerity. It takes the element of trust out of all negotiations, for where there is no risk there can be no generosity. It invites the response either of snarls or cringing. We cannot justly complain that our advances have been rebuffed when they have always been accompanied by more or less open parade of our power.

Is there then no truth in the analogy between military forces and police? The latter are not incompatible with real fellowship—are indeed

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an almost indispensable guarantee to it. Do not the former in a true sense serve the same purpose? This analogy, which has been for years a mainstay of the case against pacifism, has been riddled repeatedly by unanswered and unanswerable arguments. There is no moral resemblance in status, function or methods between army and police. The latter, operating as between citizen and citizen, serves an authority superior to them both and professedly at least impartial. The former serves one of the litigants, has no interest in justice, and does not further any impartial end by its success or failure; still less does its victory attest the righteousness of the cause on which it is employed. If and when a supernational authority takes control of all military establishments, the analogy in status and function may become valid. Even then the analogy in method will break down. Police action is discriminating, controlled and in intention at least reformatory: moreover, the more law-abiding countries refuse under normal conditions to equip their police with lethal weapons. Military action in modern times is not only indiscriminating but acts deliberately upon the principle that since the real criminal is beyond punishment it is legitimate to massacre his women-folk and children—the principle adopted in fact if not

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in theory, by the punitive bombing of the British raj. It is uncontrolled: the man in the aeroplane has no certain power to limit or foresee the effects of his operations, nor is the soldier concerned with any law save that of killing as many as possible of the enemy: whatever rules are made in peace-time for the control of war, once begun it stops short, as Mr. Winston Churchill has declared, of nothing save cannibalism. It is purely destructive to both victors and vanquished. Whatever purifying influence it may have upon individuals—and this it shares to some degree with every experience of common suffering—it demoralizes all who come under its influence, the civilian more rapidly and subtly than the fighting soldier; it lets loose passions of revenge and bitterness which bear fruit for years; it perverts the sense of justice and destroys what the police exist to maintain, respect for law and order.

This plain fact destroys the cogency of all those questions which irate and elderly colonels hurled at the conscientious objector in the war. My duty as a Christian citizen to arrest a burglar or to protect a lonely woman from rape has no sort of bearing upon my duty to smash up the homes and torture the families of men who are no more guilty than I am of any offence against morals or religion. To defend the weak of one

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nation by destroying the weak of another could only be justified, if at all, by supposing that loss of national prestige or autonomy were the gravest of all evils: for those who argue that such prestige and autonomy are to-day obstructive survivals, there is neither a case for the analogy between police action and war nor any vindication for what war in its present form involves.

In the fourth place, if the Christian pacifist is challenged with the question "Do you seriously mean that you would sit still and see your own country invaded?" he answers that this is the logical outcome of his views, that he believes it to be a far more fruitful course than war, and that in fact he does not believe that a thorough-going pacifism would have this result. Logically, of course, an acceptance of the Cross as the way of salvation involves a belief in the value of unresisting martyrdom as the supreme instrument for accomplishing God's purpose. For the Christian who takes his Master seriously there can here be little dispute as to what "taking up the Cross" involves. It is pure sentimentality to apply the words to the soldier whose first business is to deprive others of life and who is guilty of a criminal act if he does not strive to avoid laying down his own. Moreover, the Christian is committed to the belief

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that love matters more than national prestige or independence or possessions; that love cannot be served by methods which contradict it, and that man is not so depraved as to be ultimately insensitive to its appeal. If pacifism implied the purely negative and craven attitude ascribed to it by its critics it would still be effective in promoting peace. If, as is the fact, it involves an active ministry of reconciliation, then it replaces violence not by passivity but by the fostering of all that makes for trust and friendship. The corollary to non-resistance is "do good to them that hate you": and, as the appeal of the Cross throughout the centuries proves, men cannot continue to outrage one who meets torture with the prayer "Father forgive them."

In fact, once an individual definitely renounces war under all circumstances, he finds himself not only constrained to active peace-making but empowered for it.<sup>1</sup> So long as he wavers between one course and the other his pacific efforts are feeble and intermittent: once committed he can give his whole integrated powers to the task; there is a release of vision and vitality in the service, and the weak become strong. So it will be in the case of nations. It

<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, the justification for the negative and absolute character of the Peace Pledge.



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is already evident that the maintenance of order and the spreading of civilization among backward peoples depend far more upon missions, schools, hospitals and cultural agencies than upon the soldiery, that where implicit faith is placed in the power of the unarmed amazing results often follow, and that only the constant insistence upon accompanying offers of friendship with threats of war prevents such adventures in pacifism from being fully effective. Any criticism of disarmament and its perils usually assumes that its effects will be mainly negative: in fact, of course, it would set free vast resources of men and money for creative services. If, even now, we were ready to spend a tithe of what we are spending on rearmament, on international co-operation and economic reconstruction, on replacing military by civilizing agencies, on a more intensive attempt to lift the cultural level of backward peoples, we should discover that such activities far more than fear of war are able to stabilize order and secure peace.

In the fifth place and to meet the argument usually put forward by those who sympathize with the pacifist position, but cannot share it—the argument that at the moment certain great nations have yielded their freedom to dictators, that these dictators are blatantly and

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almost insanely predatory, and that dictatorships as soon as they feel a waning of their control invariably plunge into war—it must be urged that the surest way to provoke an outbreak from a megalomaniac is to threaten and try to terrify him. Assuming the worst that can be said of Mussolini or Hitler, it remains true that an intelligent psychology will approach them fearlessly and without parade of arms, will strive to understand and discuss their grievances and ambitions, and will meet their advances with generosity and “sweet reasonableness.” The worst attitude is that which has been too often adopted, vituperation and bluff, mingled with grudging concessions and threats of future action. “If you do that, I’ll smack you,” is always the sign of disciplinary incompetence: when it becomes “I’ll let you off this time, but if you do it again——” it is a plain invitation to a repetition of the offence. There is, so the Christian pacifist argues, no hope of averting disaster by this method: the other might succeed. He will not, of course, allow that either of the “leaders” are implacable (to call them gangsters serves no purpose but to inflame hate), nor that we have any real grounds for disbelieving their assertions of a desire for peace, nor that the risk of treating them in friendship is foolhardy. But if the danger is far greater than

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he believes, it would still be less than the present policy makes it. In any case it is a hazard which the Christian, for whom in Donald Hankey's words religion is "betting your life that there is a God," is bound by his faith to take. If God is love, and love the strongest influence in the world, then it is Christianity and common sense to act upon that conviction.

For after all the alternative is between a possible and, in Christian eyes, a wholly valid means of salvation and a course which can only guarantee the ruin of civilization. War on a large scale would be a disaster immeasurably worse than any which pacifism could involve. The pacifist, however strong his grounds for hope, must face the possibility that at first his non-resistance will invite successful aggression, and thus might expose his family and fellow-countrymen to invasion and carnage. If, as many maintain, gangsters are abroad, and on any sign of military weakness will descend upon us and destroy, then he can only say that, passionately as he cares for friends and country, he cannot protect his own home by smashing the homes of others; that if war is Satanic he cannot cast out Satan by Satan, and that there is a point at which men who would call themselves Christians must choose martyrdom, not only for themselves, but (which is a much harder thing)

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for what they love best, rather than an acknowledged apostasy. If, as a result, Christianity and democracy are for a time submerged, those who believe in a resurrection will realize that there can be no resurrection without a crucifixion, and that Church and freedom were born among people defenceless and persecuted. In any case the alternative is not between the victory of our ideals or their subjection. The last war produced Communism and the Treaty of Versailles, Fascism and the new paganism. The next will leave no victors, will inevitably destroy freedom and, as many think, the Church. We must at all costs cut this entail of increasing evil. The first step in that direction is the renunciation of war and the concentration of every effort upon the work of reconciliation. Better to fail upon a cross than to reign with Nero.

In that conviction the pacifist must stand, even if he has to stand alone. Under present circumstances, the State which since rearmament has taken steps to deal with sedition and is already talking of the necessity of conscription, may well decide to disfranchise or, at the threat of war, to shoot its pacifist citizens. We have already argued that this would in the long run be unwise. But it might happen, and the pacifist must face it as his share of the risk of

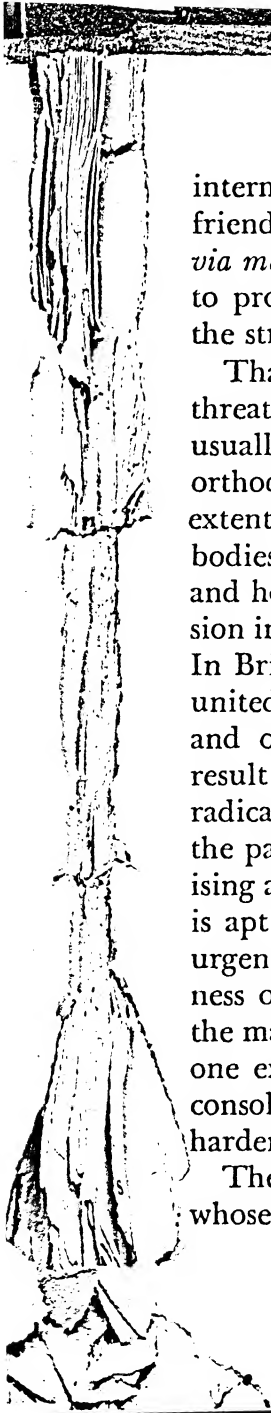
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peace-making. What he cannot do, and what the State has no right to expect him to do, is to betray his conscience and prostitute his citizenship by consenting to courses which he knows to be for him and for it physically disastrous, morally degrading and spiritually renegade.

## CHAPTER X

### IS THERE A MIDDLE WAY?

WE have tried to set out as clearly and fairly as we can the general positions of non-pacifist and pacifist Christians. As one who was not a pacifist in 1914, nor for at least fifteen years afterwards, and who now is convinced that he was then mistaken, the author may at least claim to have a personal and sincere experience of them both. Though he has done his best to read and appreciate the literature on both sides, he must admit that from the Christian standpoint he believes that there is really no serious answer to the pacifist arguments: at least he has not yet discovered it. Nevertheless, though it is necessary that the various opinions held by Christians be studied in an uncompromising statement, the task before us does not end with an individual estimate of and decision upon them. Nor, though he has stated them in a deliberately provocative fashion, is the author blind either to the necessity of an attempt at reconciliation, if not between the different doctrines at least between those who hold them, or to the existence of several points of view roughly



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intermediate between the two. Free and friendly discussion might possibly disclose a *via media* acceptable to both. It could not fail to promote mutual appreciation and diminish the strain upon the unity of the Church.

That that strain is far more severe and threatens more immediate disruption than is usually realized has already been argued. The orthodox denominationalist has little idea of the extent to which the pacifist elements in the several bodies are being led into a deep unity of faith, and how naturally that unity is finding expression in common worship and common activities. In Britain there already exists the nucleus of a united pacifist organization, and if repression and official condemnation are intensified the result might well be definite schism. The radical nature of the differences that separate the pacifist from his brethren, the uncompromising and often exclusive claims which each side is apt to make for its own position, the acute urgency of the issue at stake, and the unwillingness of the advocates on either side to discuss the matter except in a spirit of debate with anyone except their own supporters, all these are consolidating the cleavage. If it is allowed to harden, it may soon prove unbridgeable.

There are at present on both sides groups whose position is less conflicting than that of

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the main bodies. The most important of these are the two following.

Of the non-pacifists there are some who would refuse to fight not only in an aggressive but even in a purely national war, but would advocate armed action in support of a collective ideal. The ideal might be either the discharge of our obligations to enforce military sanctions under the Covenant of the League; or the attainment of a radical reform of the social order if all other means were barred; or the defence of minorities standing for democracy or religion against unwarrantable oppression when all efforts at mediation had failed. Many of the most prominent members of these groups are pacifists whose hopes have been destroyed by the course of recent events, or who feel that since the world is not yet ready for disarmament, such limited acceptance of war is a necessary intermediate step. A constructive policy, which would at once restrict the use of arms, might well have a prospect of success, at present unattainable by the absolute pacifist.

On the pacifist side there are many who, while maintaining their renunciation of war, recognize that an immediate and total disarmament, even if accompanied by intensive reconciling activity would involve so momentous a risk as to be impracticable or at least unwise and therefore not



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manifestly Christian. They would admit that until pacifying work on a far larger scale had been undertaken and tested no government could properly expose its citizens to defencelessness. Some of them would go on to urge that no one can honestly advocate an absolutist policy, which, if he were the head of a government, he could not put at once into practice. They would all agree that a measure of military force in dealing with uncivilized and war-loving peoples may legitimately be employed during the preliminary stages of achieving complete pacifism. They would argue that the same incarnational principle which makes it justifiable to recognize the importance of the "time-factor," and so to be content with something less than a root-and-branch Tolstoyism, is consistent with a measure of delay and gradual progress even in an issue on which an absolute decision is essential. They would, therefore, be more willing than some of their comrades to co-operate with agencies like the League of Nations Union and to support partial programmes if these plainly made for peace.

Such points of view, each held by definitely Christian groups, at least indicate that the line of separation is not so broad or sharp as our previous statements indicated. The matter is too serious and opinions too sincerely held to

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make any premature or sentimental softening of differences either wise or expedient. As a preliminary to any sort of progress, each party must be brought to see that the other is neither obsessed by stupid prejudices nor guilty of wilful blindness or emotional faddism. There are vital and legitimate contradictions, and these go deep. If that is appreciated, there is a basis from which the task of further and shared exploration becomes possible. It may be that this task should first aim at finding the highest possible measure of agreement as to a common policy upon which all Christians who care for peace could combine. There is much to be said for such a procedure; for it is in discussing practicable steps towards a common objective that Christians separated by denomination or doctrine establish relationships of mutual appreciation and an atmosphere of fellowship. The weakness of it is that though easy for the non-pacifist it is exceedingly hard for the absolute pacifist; for any such agreement will be either so platitudinous as to be hardly sincere or so compromising as to be irreconcilable with his convictions: the pacifist will be in the position of the man who feels that a radical revolution is alone adequate, and who is asked to consent to palliatives which, however desirable, will in effect postpone more drastic

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measures. Only if the pacifist realizes that there is at present little prospect of his views being held by more than a small minority, and that therefore he had better accept half a loaf instead of no bread, will discussion on these lines be possible.

The more attractive and ultimately more valuable course for the Christian is to grasp the issue at the point of greatest difficulty, and to begin with a considered and, if possible, representative effort to explore in the light of Christ the basal points of contrast. Upon these all else hangs, and while they are unexamined and their full significance and limits undisclosed, any co-operation on a practical programme will carry a taint of insincerity. We have recently come to suspect formulæ of reconciliation and gestures of unity which conceal unresolved and vital divergencies. They are too easy, too glib and specious, for days in which we are being stripped stark of shams and forced to deal unevasively with realities. Skill in draftsmanship is ceasing to be an asset for the Christian leader; the glossing over of basal issues incurs an almost ineffaceable stigma. The mental honesty characteristic of the younger generation has influenced us all, and in view of the insidious effects of propaganda is an asset which must at all costs be encouraged. Religious movements which

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sin against truth by magnifying their successes and suppressing criticism cannot be acquitted of a real betrayal of the faith.<sup>1</sup> In the matter of war we shall be wise to recognize that our differences go very deep, and to discuss them before it is too late at their point of origin. We have already indicated that until lately such discussion has been impossible: it may soon again be equally impossible, though for a different reason. If once the respective positions take the stereotyped form of a creed, so that any criticism of them occasions charges of back-sliding or of heresy, the difficulties in the way of candid inquiry will be enormously intensified. Prejudices are already too strong, and official pronouncements too definite, for the Churches themselves to be likely to undertake any such authoritative inquiry as we have suggested. If they did the result could not go beyond that reached by the Church of Scotland Committee or the Oxford Conference—a statement of antagonistic positions and an agreement to differ:<sup>2</sup> it might well result in a cleavage or vote so decisive as to exclude pacifists from the ministry or from communion.

<sup>1</sup> The fatal error of the Oxford Group Movement is its avowed refusal to listen to criticism and its unavowed but manifest distortion of its own achievements.

<sup>2</sup> Even so the statements of those who have discussed their differences face to face breathe a far more generous spirit than the pronouncements of individuals.

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Yet the urgent need cannot be met by a confession of inability to meet it. Nor at present would such a confession be justifiable. There is in fact a sense of unity within the Church Universal far stronger than seemed possible ten years ago. The Oxford Conference, in spite of a theological controversy deeper even than that over the question of war, was, nevertheless, not only able to discuss this issue openly but achieved a unity of the spirit manifest to all its members and lifting them into a real and active fellowship. Humbled as every Christian to-day must be by the evidences of the Church's failure to interpret and commend its faith, by the present outbreaks of paganism, brutality and war, by the urgency of the need and our inability to unite in face of it, we ought to be able to find brotherhood in penitence, and a genuine desire to seek together the truth that transcends any and all of our opinions. Pacifists who, on the whole, have been more aggressive and militant in asserting their faith than their Christian opponents—though vastly less so than the expqnets of jingoism—ought to remember that they have abjured war, and that a war of words is not far from a denial of their profession. They ought to be ready to use every means, short of dishonesty, in the service of reconciliation; for though it would be easier for

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them to gain full liberty and escape their share of responsibility for the bodies to which they now belong, to do so would, in the long run, be a disservice to their cause and to Christendom. It seems certain that if they would take and make opportunities for discussion, those who differ from them would not refuse to meet them half-way.

For if pacifists ought to shrink from anything that would sharpen controversy in the Church, and to remember that if they allow themselves to participate in an act of schism they will forfeit their hopes of influencing their fellow Church-members, non-pacifists need hardly be warned that such schism would be an almost fatal blow both to the ecumenical movement and to institutionalism. If it would be an error for a State to deprive of their citizenship men and women who are at least honest, intelligent and independent, such action would be disastrous for the Church. The Church is, alas, very obviously unpopular in these days, and heresy-hunting, even as against an unpopular cause, is almost universally condemned. Moreover, a number of the younger Church-members retain their membership from respect for or agreement with the pacifist leaders in their denomination, and outside the Church are multitudes who reverence Christ and may yet identify themselves

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with institutional religion, but who feel convinced, whether they are themselves pacifists or not, that pacifism is the only consistent course for a professing Christian—a conviction for which their admiration for the work of the Society of Friends is largely responsible. In the Church of England, which is by common consent the most militarist of British denominations except perhaps the Baptists, it is obvious that one or two of the leading pacifists have a larger personal following outside the Church, if not within it, than any other Churchmen, and in other denominations many of the indispensable leaders would fall under the ban. A pacifist schism, whether voluntary or forced, would convince the mass of thinking folks that, as they already suspect, the Churches are inextricably committed to the support of the present economic and political order, and are still at heart flunkeys to the powers that be, who trim their pulpits to the breeze that blows from Whitehall. For pacifists and non-pacifists alike the prevention of such a result should be an objective of the first importance,<sup>1</sup> and to avert it conversations such as are suggested would seem to be the first step.

<sup>1</sup> Many, perhaps most non-pacifists, will certainly regard this note of urgency as exaggerated and sensational. If so, they do not know the strength of conviction and the strain upon denominational loyalty among Christian pacifists.

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From such an approach definitely creative results might confidently be expected. It is one of the clearest indications that war is an evil that only in an atmosphere of fellowship can any spiritual achievement be attained. The distracted self has lost its power to reach upwards; the broken group, its single-mindedness destroyed by the clash of rival personalities, becomes beset with mistrust and inhibited by partisanship. Anyone who has studied the psychology or experienced the reality of what Christians call *koinonia*, will know that its possibility depends upon the sympathy, shared loyalty and integration of its members, and that if it is attained results vastly exceeding what the sum total of its constituents could separately achieve emerge—emerge in the strict sense of that word as at once novel, immediate and unpredictable. A group of Christians, each holding on reasonable grounds his own view of war and representing the different positions, if they were able to attain fellowship, might disclose an attitude more satisfying than any of those that we have tried to describe.

Even if no such creative result were reached, the mere fact of meeting in fellowship to discuss the basic issues would change the whole outlook. At present the two parties seldom meet except to register their disagreements.



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Discussion is replaced by debate, and opinions are hardened. Moreover, each side only opens its heart in the presence of its own supporters: we are already splitting into parties, each gaining from the enthusiasm of its members a sense of its own strength and logical supremacy. Heresies and schisms have usually been preceded by precisely this process: opinions crystallize into creeds; these become the slogans of a section; the section fosters intensive fellowship among its sympathizers, and evokes antagonism from the orthodox; the opinion becomes the faith of a new denomination. We can see how in the past such cleavages might have been avoided by mutual friendliness and mutual understanding. If we can now get together, although only to reaffirm our unity in diversity, we can then look to a genuine measure of co-operation over matters to which we can both honestly assent. The search for more practical objectives would then have good chance of success: it would at least be undertaken with the cards on the table. If we begin with it and shirk the deeper problems, each party will suspect the honesty of the other and fear to compromise its own unflinching resistance. In the first case we may hope for a synthesis: in the second nothing can result but a highest common factor, and this will be lamentably small. Plati-

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tudes—an agreement, for example, that we can both support the League of Nations if suitably reformed—would be little better than useless. But there are plainly many other possibilities, and once an attitude of friendliness has been established, agreement upon one or other of them might be possible.

We have been concerned in these pages rather with the principles at stake than with the practical steps arising out of them. Each point of view has naturally its own programme. The non-pacifist is convinced that the first necessity is to establish justice between nations, and with this in view to secure respect for international law, to extend the scope and strengthen the authority of international courts, to work for a constitutional federalizing of peoples under the League of Nations, and to develop the possibilities of collective security. There is disagreement about details (“conciliation or sanctions”), but the general policy is clear. Pacifists, regarding the fostering of mutual trust as prior to the establishment of any really representative and recognized super-state, look rather to disarmament, accompanied by economic reconstruction, redress of grievances, and such other reforms as will destroy the case for national self-sufficiency, imperialism and exploitation. They therefore advocate the convening of a World Conference

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with power to discuss, investigate and take decisions upon the underlying causes of war.

Between these two there appears as wide a difference as between the theories that underlie them. But, in fact, both sides being agreed in their objective, and many non-pacifists looking to conciliation as the primary function of the League, agreement between them is less difficult to envisage when they discuss the next steps towards peace. The fact that Lord Lothian's proposals commanded a large measure of pacifist support,<sup>1</sup> and that many non-pacifists advocate proposals for a World Conference on the lines of the Van Zealand Report to deal with problems of population, raw materials, credits, tariffs and currencies, colonies and subject peoples, indicate that along these lines a course of common action could be formulated and agreed upon. We believe that a fuller understanding of each other's principles is a necessary preliminary to the consideration of policies, but recognize that co-operation in a common, practicable programme would be a sure method of strengthening fellowship, avoiding schism, and opening the way to a more fruitful discussion of differences. Both parties are equally concerned with the removal of war: on Christian grounds their attitude towards it differs, but both agree

<sup>1</sup> Cf. letter in *The Times*, 24 April 1937.

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that it is evil. One believes that to take an absolutely pacifist position would, in fact, delay the attainment of peace by encouraging aggressiveness and disarming the peaceful—"Not all at once, and, alas, not yet," is their contention. The other believes that only by a drastic change can any escape from war be accomplished, and that the risk involved must be taken—"Act at once, whatever the result: it is both more Christian and more effective to do so," is their reply. A common policy which did not raise the question of armed force might rally them both to its support and disclose to them that they were less far apart than their respective theories suggested.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE NEED FOR FULL INQUIRY

It is at once the glory and the difficulty of the Christian religion that it is essentially concerned not with creeds or cultus or codes of conduct, but with personal relationships. As such it must, of course, possess an intellectual and moral interpretation: truth and goodness are necessary for any enduring relationship, for any worthy love. But it forfeits its true character if it makes doctrinal or ethical orthodoxy its primary obligation. Thus it can never accept a cut-and-dried legalism and say to its adherents "this is the law, unless you observe it you cease to be a Christian." The immoral Christian will be a poor specimen, but not necessarily more so than the pharisaical—indeed, the Gospels suggest that to live by scrupulous conformity to rules is to endanger the humility, sensitiveness and spontaneity which are vital for true religion.

Attempts to transform the way of Christ into a rigidly defined and strictly fenced rail-road have often been made and have still powerful advocates. We all desire to escape the perils of

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liberty, or at least to shelter others from them; to avoid the trouble of thinking out a moral issue and the responsibility of deciding upon it. Short cuts and mechanical obedience are an easy substitute for discipleship, though acceptance of them, in fact, destroys the life of faith. We walk by faith and not by sight, and a handbook of regulations is no substitute for the daily dependence upon God and the guidance of His Spirit in conditions which, since they concern persons, can never be standardized or regimented without destroying their primary quality. The legal maxim, "Hard cases make bad law," is hard to reconcile with the Christian principle that every case, our own included, is a hard case, and that each must be treated individually. Any competent Christian pastor will constantly find himself recommending totally different treatments in cases legally indistinguishable. Moreover, the Christian is warned by his Master not to judge but to forgive, not to coerce but to understand. There are for him no commandments but love of God and love of the brethren, and love's way can never be put into the leading strings of statutory definition.

Here is, of course, the reason for the wide variety in ethical decisions which so often causes the unsympathetic observer to ridicule the "discipline" of the Churches. The devotees of

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efficiency prefer to deal with human beings as hands or items on a pay-sheet or cogs on the wheels of an organization. They are horrified at the elasticity and apparent inconsistencies of the Christian ethic, and denounce the Churches for the very quality which is or ought to be their strength. "The Church doesn't know its own mind," "the Churches, except the Roman Catholics, never give a clear answer on an issue," "I want to be plainly told what is right and what is wrong"—that sort of criticism is very frequent, and shows how widespread is the failure to appreciate the elementary character of Christianity. Of course, in a religion of personal relationships, where the subtle and intimate nexus of love determines conduct, there will always be wide divergence between the interpretations which particular disciples put upon their obligation. For one man voluntary poverty is an obligation which could not be refused without sin, for another an obligation which it would be sin to accept. Birth-control may be mortal sin for some; it is certainly a means to fullness of life for others. War, if obviously evil, may be legitimate for one man as the proper expression of his Christianity where the choice is between it and some other manifestation of devilry; to another it may be always an outrage to which under no circum-

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stances at his soul's peril could he assent. There must always be in Christendom unity in diversity, a unity of particular and differently constituted individuals and groups, whose refusal to accept standardized codes is a condition of their power to grow, whose variety enriches and promotes the common life of the Church. For it is by the investigation and comparison of such differences, by the tension and mutual interaction between them, and by their constant reference to the normative example of Christ that progress is encouraged. Where the Church has refused the effort to understand and test them, and has either excluded one or acquiesced in both, there has been stagnation. Disheartening as are the inconsistencies of the Church's witness, they are more fruitful than a compulsory and static unanimity. In this respect the Reformed Churches compare very favourably with Rome: for Rome's traditional ethics are almost wholly incapable of dealing with the modern world: a Church which can only handle the problems of property, sex and war by strict enforcement of mediæval precedents is really irrelevant to the present situation in each of these basal relationships. It is a tragedy for Christendom that the Roman pontiff, bound by this theology and by the influence of the concordat, should be condemned to meet



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the use of mustard rain in Abyssinia with the pathetic pieties of his contemporary pronouncements.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, our regret that we cannot more unitedly interpret the mind of the Master is a constant reminder of the measure by which His stature exceeds our own. There is a not dissimilar variety in the pictures of Him that have come down to us: to one evangelist it is His royal majesty, to another His tenderness and compassion, to another His aloofness and sublimity that appeal. The common elements are so strong and so coherent as plainly to demonstrate that they are portraying the same unique and objective figure: but their variety attests at once His grandeur and His many-sidedness. He is like a mountain-mass of which human eyes can only see certain aspects and guess that the summit lies behind them. If He could be accurately scaled down so as to be faithfully represented in a code, we should outgrow Him as we have outgrown the credal formularies of the fourth century or the moral theology of the thirteenth. We bury Him in a definition and He rises again from the grave, and if we are humble enough to prefer Him to our formula will lead us still.

<sup>1</sup> In January, March and May 1936, cf. C. J. Cadoux, *Roman Catholicism and Freedom*, pp. 193-4, and the note appended to this chapter.

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Such considerations, which could be illustrated freely from individual experience or the history of Christendom, ought to encourage us in our present perplexity over the question of war. The matter cannot be settled by ecclesiastical fiat: agreement may take a generation to achieve: that is no reason to discourage us or to delay our efforts. Faith in matters of this sort can remove mountains, and so long as faith stands firm, we can see our difficulties as opportunities, our tension-points as points of growth. The unpardonable thing would be to let the issue be evaded, whether through a refusal to recognize its urgency, or by the pretence that those who disagree with us are merely stupid and perverse. An honest controversy, honestly and generously discussed, can be, as we all know, amazingly clarifying and productive. Confident of our essential unity, trusting one another to follow and speak truth as each sees it, we should welcome the call to wrestle with a problem so crucial, so typical and at the moment so divisive.

We would appeal, therefore, to the groups of Christians—United Councils, Theological Societies, Joint Fraternals and the like—which exist in large numbers and almost everywhere, to take this matter into their programmes and give it a prominent place, and to individuals who

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have the issue at heart to get together such friends and neighbours as share the Christian faith, differ over war, and can be trusted to discuss it with intelligence and good temper. It is, as we have urged, premature to expect official leaders of the Church to do so: they cannot disregard their constituents or express opinions which may be quoted against them—or at least it is asking too much to urge them to do so. But if they could realize from concrete evidence how widespread was the interest, and how practicable and useful was discussion of it, we might look to see authoritative and better informed leadership in the future.

It is with the desire to stimulate such discussion in accordance with the recommendation of the Oxford Conference that this book has been written. Its purpose will explain even if it does not justify its deliberately provocative tone: for the necessary preliminary to the search for fuller insight is that we should appreciate both the opinions and the strength of conviction of the chief parties to the present controversy. It is not easy for one who is deeply involved in that controversy to conceal his personal views or to deal fairly with those that he has come to reject, though he has done his best to avoid exaggerating or distorting them and to get his account of them checked by their supporters. The book is

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intended primarily for British Christians, and has therefore dealt somewhat cursorily with the Continental and American attitude to the problem. But there is some truth in the claim that America is too remote from and the Continent too close to the fact of war for an investigation that shall be both realistic and detached. Moreover, theologically this country stands midway between the centres of humanist and of transcendentalist thought, and is thereby specially fitted to formulate and apply an incarnational philosophy, which shall contain and synthesize the truths exaggerated by each of them. To that great task a study of the concrete problem of war will be found an admirable preparation.

For to discuss our attitude to war is, as we have seen, inevitably to be driven back to the basal affirmations of our faith. Of them, as most of us are aware, a re-examination and re-statement are overdue. Theologians have done much to prepare the way: there is among them a degree of agreement probably larger than at any time during the past four centuries, and certainly larger than anyone seeing the diversities of the sects would believe. But their work has been frustrated by the fact that it is regarded as academic and almost as irrelevant. Their fellow Christians, whose concern is rather to

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live out the faith as they have received it than to deepen their understanding of its meaning, will only discover a renewed appreciation of it by approaching it along the line of some concrete problem which demands solution. We have claimed that war is such a problem. To study it would do as much to enlighten and deepen and unify the thought of the Churches as to clear up the particular issue.

## NOTE

### THE CHURCH OF ROME AND PEACE

THIS book whose primary aim is to encourage the study recommended by the Ecumenical Conference at Oxford has not referred except very briefly to the attitude of Roman Catholics. Nor in view of their official adherence to the doctrine of "the just war," of their apparent acceptance of the Italian destruction of Abyssinia as laudable, and of their conduct in the civil war in Spain is there much occasion to do so. It is true that Benedict XV in August 1917, and in the Encyclical *Pacem Dei* in 1920, and Pius XI in *Ubi Arcano*, 1922, and on various other occasions till Christmas 1934, spoke out plainly in condemning war and called their clergy and people to an active service of peace: but their words were buried, as more recent events have proved. Certainly in Britain there is no sort of support for the Christian Peace Movement from any Roman Catholics except a small group of laity. But it would be ungenerous not to express thankfulness for the noble insistence of Cardinal Faulhaber that "even the teaching of moral theology in regard to war must speak a new language and take account of the new facts" and that "the senseless maxim *si vis pacem para bellum* must be dismantled like an old battleship"<sup>1</sup>; and for the recently published volumes *The Church and War* by F. Stratmann, and *Peace and the Clergy* by "a German Priest." At a time when the Concordat has gone far to gag and bind the Papacy, and when as the German Priest sadly admits its attitude to war is bringing his Church into world-wide disrepute, it is earnestly to be hoped that these protests will bear fruit.

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon at Disarmament Conference, February 1932.

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